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US VIRGIN ISLANDS



ALIVE!

SHOPPING HOTELS RESTAURANTS
NIGHTTIME ENTERTAINMENT DAYTIME FUN

Harriet Greenberg & Douglas Greenberg

VISIT…



The US VIRGIN ISLANDS ALIVE!

2nd Edition

Harriet Greenberg & Douglas Greenberg



HUNTER

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gotostthomas.com



Produced entirely by island residents, GoToStThomas.com has useful info, links, articles, maps, photos, event calendars, and live webcams to help make your time on St. Thomas great.

Locally grown, globally known!

About the Alive Guides

Reliable, detailed and personally researched by knowledgeable authors, the *Alive!* series was founded by Harriet and Arnold Greenberg.

Arnold has co-authored *South America on $40 A Day*, as well as *St. Martin & St. Barts Alive!* and *Buenos Aires & the Best of Argentina Alive!*

Harriet has co-authored *The British Virgin Islands Alive!* and *St. Martin & St. Barts Alive!*

This accomplished travel-writing team also operates a renowned bookstore, **The Complete Traveller**, at 199 Madison Avenue in New York City.

Preface

Looking down on the Caribbean Sea, you'll see about 150 blips bunched in the dazzling blue waters between Puerto Rico and St. Martin. These are the Virgin Islands – United States and British – and, though they are tiny, they pack great, action-oriented vacations into those small packages. Most of the blips are uninhabited cays and islets. The major United States Virgin Islands are **St. Croix, St. John,** and **St. Thomas**.

Not so many years ago, the West Indies were strictly winter destinations, enjoyed by a privileged few. That is no longer true, and the Virgin Islands are year-round attractions. The lures of any Caribbean vacation, sun and sea are here in abundance. The Caribbean's largest yacht charter operators are based here, and there are over 100 scuba dive sites in the area. Snorkeling over pristine coral reefs, deep-sea fishing, water-skiing and windsurfing are well organized and easily accessible. There are golf courses, tennis courts, riding stables and hiking trails. And while many Caribbean islands boast of sugar sand beaches, the Virgin Islands really have them.

These are characteristics that the islands share, but there are differences between them as well. Each has its own beat, each offers a distinct holiday, and each has a devoted coterie. We have tried to capture that special beat for you as we profile each island.

The US islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix are cosmopolitan and sophisticated, with gourmet restaurants and chic shops. St. John is informal and low key, yet it has the most elegant resorts. St. Thomas and St. John are close to one another and the British Virgin Islands as well. St. Croix is 40 miles away.

It discourages us to find many vacationers seemingly rooted in their hotel, rarely venturing out to explore the islands on their own. The more adventurous, acting on a tip from the bellhop, invariably head for the most expensive spot in town. This guide has been written to help you explore the unique aspects of each island and to enhance your vacation in the process.

Samuel Johnson once said, "The use of traveling is to regulate imagination by reality and, instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are."

Bon Voyage!

Harriet Greenberg

Douglas Greenberg

We Love to Get Mail

This book has been carefully researched to bring you current, accurate information. But no place is unchanging. We welcome your comments for future editions. Please write us at: *The Alive Guides*, c/o Hunter Publishing, 130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818, or e-mail us at comments@hunterpublishing.com.

Introduction

Discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1493, and by millions of North Americans in the last 60 years, the USVI, St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, are the premier tourist destinations in the Caribbean. They are visited by over 1½ million people each year. Many return again and again. In fact, hundreds of continentals (the name West Indians give to mainlanders) have fallen in love with the islands and moved here to open small hotels, award-winning restaurants, and shops. Others have purchased condos and spend part of the year or retire here.

The Attractions



After a totally unscientific survey conducted at poolsides, on ferries and over piña coladas, I've come up with some reasons to explain the islands' wide appeal.

- The weather in this part of the Caribbean is near-perfect year-round, with daytime temperatures in the 70s and 80s. There is no rainy season and it is a rare day when the sun doesn't shine a bit. Because the islands are located in the path of the cooling trade winds, there is always a breeze for windsurfers and sailing boats.
- While many Caribbean islands advertise white sandy beaches, the USVI actually have them. Magens Bay, consistently voted one of the 10 loveliest beaches in the world, is just one of a score of fine beaches on St. Thomas, while St. John's beautiful Trunk Bay even has a marked underwater trail for snorkelers.
- Unlike many resorts where accommodations are lined up along a beach strip, hotels here are scattered throughout the islands and each has a distinct personality. The variety extends to

price as well. There are many small hotels, inns and guest houses whose off-the-beach locale cuts their costs.

- A popular option, particularly for families with children, is to rent a villa (condo) for your stay. Here too, the range of amenities is enormous.
- You will enjoy dining here, for, once again, the variety is astonishing. You should try some of the fine restaurants island-wide. Restaurants are set in old sugar mills, at surfside and on hillsides overlooking the harbor. Dinner can be a "dress-up" event or a very casual one. You can easily find a place to match your mood.
- Scuba diving is a major lure. Instruction and equipment are first-rate and there are an unusual number of challenging dive sites, including an underwater National Park on St. Croix.
- Activities such as golf, tennis, snorkeling, windsurfing, deep-sea fishing and parasailing are easily arranged. In some cases they are even included in your hotel rate.
- St. Thomas rivals neighboring Tortola in the British Virgin Islands as the kick-off point for the largest number of yacht charters in the Caribbean. Both bareboat and crewed yachts are available. Because the companies here are experienced and reliable, you can relax and enjoy this unique vacation adventure.
- Because the islands are close to one another (St. Thomas and St. John are only three miles apart) and to the British Virgin Islands, you can easily explore several by signing up for a day-sail or catching a local ferry.
- Shopping, some vacationers' most serious sport, is top notch, particularly on St. Thomas, where goods from all over the world are sold at

duty-free prices. St. Croix has fewer shops, but most are branches of the best on-island establishments.

- All three islands promise starry nights, limbo shows, steel and reggae bands and exotic foods, such as fungi (foongee) and kalaloo – and they deliver. If you are starting to think that these sibling islands are three peas in a pod, think again. Each has a distinct personality and a devoted coterie of fans. St. Croix, the largest of the three and separated from the others by 40 miles of sea, has retained much of its Danish character. With rolling hills and wide open spaces, it is picturesque and its colorful capital, Christiansted, is low key. St. Thomas is cosmopolitan and sophisticated, with major hotels, a bustling commercial center and daily traffic jams. But five minutes from downtown there are sugar-sand beaches and quiet coves. Tiny St. John is arguably the Caribbean's loveliest island. Its unique character has been preserved by the National Park, which encompasses more than half its acres. The island's best-known resort has seven beaches, all of which are open to the public.

The US bought the then Danish West Indies in 1917 for $25 million – an astonishingly high price, almost $300 per acre. In retrospect, it ranks with the deal Peter Stuyvesant got when he bought Manhattan Island for wampum.

The USVI – An Orientation



Where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic, 1,100 miles southeast of Miami, you'll see 100 blips bunched in the dazzling blue waters between Puerto Rico and St. Martin. Part of the Lesser Antilles, these are the Virgin Islands – both United States and British. From the air a

Caribbean Islands
Atlantic Ocean
Florida
Bahama Islands
CUBA
JAMAICA
HAITI
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
PUERTO RICO
VIRGIN ISLANDS
Anguilla
Barbuda
Antigua
Guadeloupe
Dominica
Martinique
St. Kitts & Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Grenada
Barbados
Trinidad & Tobago
Margarita
Tortuga
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
Aruba
Curacao
COLOMBIA
Caribbean Sea
PANAMA
NICARAGUA
HONDURAS
COSTA RICA
N
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few seem large and dotted with buildings, but most are tiny and uninhabited. Until the 1990's there were only three inhabited US islands – St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. A fourth was added in 1992 when Water Island became part of the territory. In St. Thomas' harbor, it has lovely beaches and bicycle paths, but no accommodations. The population of the territory has grown rapidly in the last few years as emigrants from nearby islands have relocated here. Chartered yachts and sailing ships anchor at the uninhabited islands and cays to enjoy the pristine coral reefs and beaches.

The Virgin Islands are year-round attractions. The lures of any Caribbean vacation, sun and sea are here in abundance. The Caribbean's largest yacht charter operators are based here and there are over 100 dive sites in the area. Snorkeling, deep-sea fishing, water-skiing and windsurfing are easily accessible. There are golf courses, tennis courts, riding stables and hiking trails. These are characteristics that the islands share, but there are differences between them as well. Each has its own beat, each offers a distinct holiday and each has a devoted coterie. We have tried to capture that special flavor for you as we begin each island chapter – but we offer a thumbnail sketch below so you can match the island's personality to your own.

Wherever you bed down, you are not limited to just one island. You can move from one to the others quickly and inexpensively. We'll expand on this below as well.

St. Thomas. The second island in both size and population is nonetheless the hub of the territory. It is the liveliest of the three, with scores of resort hotels, first-rate restaurants and the best duty-free shops in the Caribbean. **Charlotte Amalie**, the capital, is built around a stunning harbor. The harbor played a big role in the island's development and continues to do so today. It is not unusual to see four cruise ships at anchor on any given day. The drawback to that is traffic jams into and out of town daily. The rest of the island is less crowded, but it does have several commercial centers. There is a golf course.

St. John. Only three miles away, St. John is uncommercialized. Over two-thirds of the island belongs to a US National Park, allowing its considerable natural beauty to remain undisturbed. It has magnificent beaches and two first-class resorts, but most guests opt for the eco-resorts and small guest houses. **Cruz Bay** is easy to explore and has fine restaurants and shops. **Coral Bay**, the second town, is growing in size and ambience. The National Park offers a wide range of activities.

St. Croix. Twice the size of St. Thomas, St. Croix has only a few thousand more people, which gives the island a laid-back appeal. Remnants of sugar mills dot the countryside and the island has retained much of its Danish character. This is very appealing as you walk the streets of the capital, **Christiansted** and the smaller **Frederiksted**. St. Croix's beaches are not as beautiful as those on the other islands, but it has excellent diving options at an unusual wall off-shore and at the underwater monument on Buck Island. It has a few resort hotels, but most guests stay at the charming inns and guest houses owned by local families. St. Croix boasts two fine golf courses and a variety of dining options. It also has the Virgin Islands' only casino.

Gay & Lesbian Travel

The US Virgin Islands are gay-friendly destinations. Each of the islands has an active gay community. St. Croix has a number of resorts near Frederiksted that cater specifically to gay and lesbian travelers.

Travelers With Disabilities

Travelers with mobility problems may encounter difficulties here. The islands are mountainous, there are few sidewalks and those are often uneven and broken. Beach and sight access often requires agility. Passengers board and disembark cruise ships using a moveable staircase directly onto the tarmac. Newer resorts have accessible ground-floor rooms,

while others have rooms with widened doors and renovated bathrooms. A good choice on St. John is the **Caneel Bay Resort**, ☎ (888) 767-3966. On St. Thomas, **Marriott Frenchman's Reef**, ☎ (800) 524-2000. On St. Croix, **Hibiscus Beach Hotel**, ☎ (800) 420-0121. Friends have recommended **Access Adventures/B. Roberts Travel** as an excellent travel agency and resource for travelers with mobility issues. ☎ (585) 889-9096, dltravel@prodigy.net.

Inter-Island Travel

St. Thomas to St. John



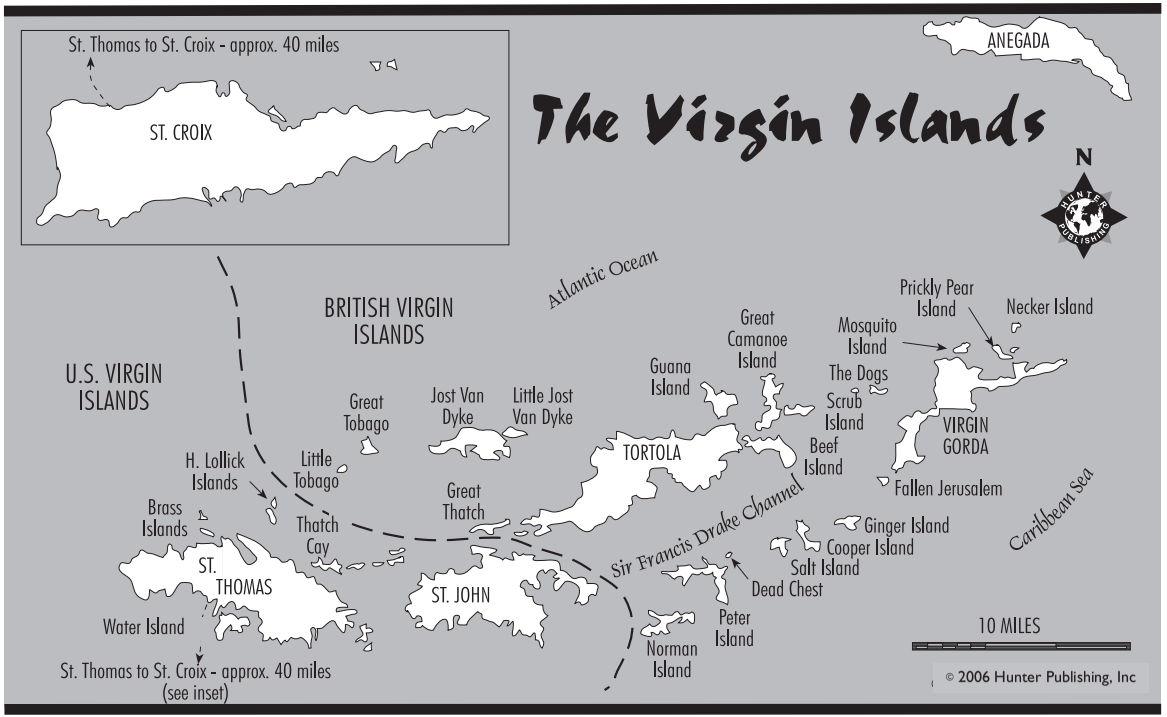
Separated by Pillsbury Sound (three miles wide), these islands are a 20-minute ferry ride apart. Ferries leave from **Red Hook Dock** (East End, St. Thomas) on the hour from 8 am to midnight. Additional ferries leave at 6:30 and 7:30 am weekdays. Return ferries leave from **Cruz Bay** (St. John) on the hour from 7 am to 10 pm, with one additional ferry at 11:15 pm. Fare is $3 per adult, $1 per child each way.

Other ferries leave from the Charlotte Amalie Dock (waterfront – near the Holiday Inn) every two hours, starting at 9 am. The last ferry leaves at 5:30 pm. Return from Cruz Bay is every two hours, with the first crossing at 7:15 am and the last at 3:45 pm. The ride takes 45 minutes. Fare is $7 each way, $3 for children.

Guests at Caneel Bay (☎ 340 776-6111) and the Westin St. John (☎ 340 693-8000) can use their private ferries. Check for current schedules and fares. Some packages include these transfers.

Car Ferry Service

There is car ferry service between Red Hook and Cruz Bay daily. Two lines operate the service – **Boyson, Inc.**, ☎ (340) 776-6294 and **Republic Barge**, ☎ (340) 779-4000. Call


The Virgin Islands
St. Thomas to St. Croix - approx. 40 miles
ST. CROIX
ANEGADA
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Atlantic Ocean
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS
Prickly Pear Island
Necker Island
Mosquito Island
Great Camanoe Island
Guana Island
The Dogs
Scrub Island
VIRGIN GORDA
Beef Island
Fallen Jerusalem
Great Tobago
Jost Van Dyke
Little Jost Van Dyke
TORTOLA
H. Lollick Islands
Little Tobago
Great Thatch
Brass Islands
Thatch Cay
Sir Francis Drake Channel
Caribbean Sea
Ginger Island
Cooper Island
Salt Island
Dead Chest
ST. THOMAS
ST. JOHN
Water Island
Peter Island
Norman Island
10 MILES
St. Thomas to St. Croix - approx. 40 miles (see inset)
© 2006 Hunter Publishing, Inc

them to check current schedules. The ride takes 20 minutes. At this writing the one-way fare is $22 and the round-trip fare is $35.

St. Thomas to St. Croix

The most popular and fastest transport is a plucky seaplane service operated by **Seaborne Airlines**, ☎ (340) 773-6442 or www.seaborneairlines.com. Planes take off from Charlotte Amalie's harbor and put down 25 minutes later in the harbor of Christiansted. There are over a dozen flights each day. Their office is at Yacht Haven Marina on the waterfront.

Cape Air, ☎ (800) 352-0714 or www.flycapeair.com, and **Caribbean Sun**, ☎ (866) 864-6272 or www.flycsa.com, fly between St. Thomas and St. Croix and from both to Puerto Rico. Expect to pay about $80.

Virgin Islands Fast Ferry is a catamaran service that makes the 40-mile crossing between St. Thomas and St. Croix in 75 minutes. It has air- conditioned seating and open-air decks as well. It's a terrific ride. Hopefully, it will be successful, but do check before making plans. Previous ferries have not lasted. At this writing, service runs from mid-December to early May. There are two scheduled crossings (each way) weekdays, except Tues, and three scheduled crossings (each way) on weekends and holidays. There is no service on Christmas Day and there are extra crossings during Carnival celebrations (St. Thomas' in April and St. Croix's in December-January). ☎ (340) 719-0099 or www.virginislandfastferry.com. Expect to pay $65 RT and $38 one-way for adults. Children under three ride free while those three-12 pay $54 RT and $34 one-way. Holiday surcharge is $5.

St. Thomas to Tortola (BVI)

Ferries run from Charlotte Amalie to Tortola's West End Ferry Dock over a dozen times each day. Some continue on to Road Town, the capital. The trip to the West End takes 45 minutes. Add 30 minutes more for the trip to Road Town.

There is also daily service between Red Hook (East End) and the West End Ferry Dock. None continues on to Road Town. Taxis meet the ferries. The trip from Red Hook takes 30 minutes. Return trips take longer since they stop at St. John to clear immigration. The fare from either location is $40. For current schedules contact:

Smith's Ferry Services, ☎ (340) 775-7292.

Native Son, Inc., ☎ (340) 774-8685.



A Tortola-based company has started a new ferry service – **The Road Town Fast Ferry**. It uses a high-speed catamaran to connect Charlotte Amalie and Road Town (Tortola's capital) in 50 minutes. There is an air-conditioned cabin as well as open-air decks. At this writing, there are two trips daily, but do check schedules. ☎ (340) 777-2800, www.tortolafastferry.com.

St. Thomas-Virgin Gorda & Jost Van Dyke

There is also ferry service from Red Hook to Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke. Boats make a stop in Cruz Bay, St. John. They do not run daily. The trip to Virgin Gorda takes 75 minutes ($40), to Jost Van Dyke takes 45 minutes ($40). ☎ Inter-island (340) 776-6597.



A passport or proof of identity is required for the British islands.

Special Events



Monthly art shows, chamber music concerts and Texas chili cookoffs and other special events are scheduled on each of the islands. They include yacht races, sportfishing tournaments and "Carnival" celebrations. Carnivals are the islands' most

eagerly awaited events and have grown from week-long partying to elaborate festivals. A way for islanders to celebrate their West Indian culture, they date back to when Africans first arrived on the islands. There are colorful parades, costumed revelers, fabulous floats, food fairs, all-night partying to calypso and scratch bands, beauty pageants and traditional "mocko jumbie" stiltwalkers. St. Croix celebrates in December into early January, St. John's celebration starts in June and culminates over July 4th weekend, while St. Thomas celebrates in April. The Tourist Board maintains an event calendar on its website. Check for events and dates at www.usvitourism.vi.



Specifics on Carnival are detailed in each island chapter.

Some annual events that stand out include:

- **Scratch & Fungi Band Fiesta**, December, St. Thomas
- **Bastille Day Celebrations & French Heritage Week**, July, St. Thomas
- **St. John Blues Fest**, March, St. John
- **Coral Bay's Thanksgiving Regatta**, November, St. John
- **St. Croix International Regatta**, February, St. Croix Yacht Club
- **Half Ironman Triathlon**, May, St. Croix
- **Open Atlantic Blue Marlin Tournament**, July/August, St. Thomas

Tourism Contacts

The Division of Tourism, which is under the aegis of the Dept. of Commerce, maintains local tourist offices on each island and in major US cities. They offer literature, maps and up-to-the-minute information.

- In New York – ☎ (212) 332-2222
- In Los Angeles – ☎ (213) 739-0138
- U.S. toll free – ☎ (800) 372-8784 or www.usvi-tourism.vi
- On St. Thomas – near Market Square, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 774-8784, www.st-thomas.com
- On St. John – near the Cruz Bay Dock, ☎ (340) 776-6450, www.st-john.com
- On St. Croix – Old Scale House, Christiansted, ☎ (340) 773-0495, www.st-croix.com

Getting Here

By Air



Major US carriers have non-stop flights to St. Thomas from such gateway cities as New York, Miami, Atlanta and Washington D.C. There are non-stop flights to St. Croix from Miami and Charlotte, N.C. Many more passengers fly to San Juan, Puerto Rico where they transfer to commuter lines for the 20-minute flight to St. Thomas or the 40-minute flight to St. Croix. St. John does not have an airport.

American Airlines, www.aa.com, ☎ (800) 433-7300, **Delta**, www.delta.com, ☎ (800) 221-1212, **Continental**, www.continental.com, ☎ (800) 231-0856, and **USAir**, www.usairways.com, ☎ (800) 428-4322, are the major US carriers to San Juan.

Jet Blue, www.jetblue.com, ☎ (800) 538-2583, has recently begun service to San Juan as well. All of the above also have service to St. Thomas, except Jet Blue.

The commuter line with the largest number of connecting flights at this writing is **American Eagle**, www.aa.com, ☎ (800) 433-7300. **Cape Air Airlines**, www.flycapeair.com, ☎ (800) 352-0714, **Air Sunshine**,

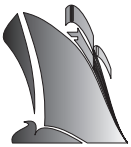
www.airsunshine.com, ☎ (800) 327-8900, and **Liat**, www.liatairline.com, ☎ (268) 624-4727, are also flying.



Tip: Make your commuter flight reservation when you book your main flight. These are small planes and they fill up quickly. You can check your bags straight through on American Eagle and Cape Air. For Air Sunshine and Liat, it's best to pick up your bags in San Juan and re-check them on the commuter flight.

Fares vary widely and checking the internet is probably the best way to begin. Check special packages organized by hotels and airlines.

By Cruise Ship



Many vacationers arrive in St. Thomas aboard a cruise ship, spend a day on the island, realize they'd like to spend more time there, and return for a longer stay. At least a dozen cruise lines dock in Charlotte Amalie and it is not uncommon to see three or four ships in the harbor on any given day. Most pull in at the **West Indies Dock**, which is east of town. However, a few have begun to use the newer facilities at **Crown Bay**, just west of town.

Frederiksted's St. Croix pier has reopened, but at this writing cruise ships stop only for refueling. Service may resume in the future.

Most cruise ships leave from East Coast ports, especially from Miami, but some do sail from the West Coast through the Panama Canal. Cruise lines that dock in the Virgin Islands include **Norwegian Caribbean Lines**, www.ncl.com, ☎ (800) 327-7030, **Holland-America Line**, www.holland-america.com, ☎ (800) 426-0327. **Princess Cruises**, www.princesscruises.com, ☎ (800) 774-6237, and **Royal Caribbean Cruises**, www.royalcaribbean.com, ☎ (800)

327-6700. Check with your travel agent or look in the travel section of your newspaper.

Getting Ready

Entry Requirements



Entry requirements have tightened. Your proof of identity will be checked before you board your initial flight. A current passport is the easiest option. You can also travel on an expired passport, but only if the expiration date is less than five years old. Other accepted documents include an original birth certificate (with a raised seal) or a voter's registration card plus a government-issued photo ID. Having these documents will speed your departure from the islands as well. Nationals of countries other than the US require the same documents as to enter a US mainland port. The same documents are required to visit the nearby BVI.

US Customs

Customs regulations are a boon to the island's shopkeepers and to you. Here's why: they provide for $1,200 worth of duty-free exemptions, rather than the $600 limit elsewhere in the Caribbean. Purchases can be mailed home and are included in your exemption. Gifts valued under $100 can be mailed daily without affecting your exemption (this is limited to one daily). Adults (over 21) can return with five fifths of alcoholic beverages. A sixth is permitted if it is produced on the island (e.g. rum). Island products, (straw bags, perfume, jewelry) are totally exempt from duty. Should you exceed the $1,200 limit, your purchases are dutiable at a flat rate of 5%, rather than the 10% applied elsewhere.

Five cartons of cigarettes and 100 cigars can also be brought back by US residents. Combine this with the islands'

duty-free status, a happy remnant of Danish days, and you can see why retailing is big business here.



If you depart on a non-stop flight you clear Customs at Cyril E. King Airport (St. Thomas) or Henry Rohlsen Airport (St. Croix). Those returning to the mainland through Puerto Rico will clear Customs in San Juan.

Canadian Customs

Canadian residents who have been out of Canada for at least seven days may return with C$750 of goods duty-free. Those who've been away less than seven days, but more than 48 hours, can return with C$200. You cannot pool these allowances with other family members. Alcohol and tobacco products can be included in these allowances. Gifts valued under C$60 may be sent, but only one package per recipient. Check further at www.ccra.gc.ca.

Money Matters



Currency is the US dollar. Major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Diners) are accepted at most hotels, the larger restaurants and most shops. There are surprising exceptions, however, so you should bring cash or traveler's checks with you.

Tips are not included in your bill, but are sometimes added in a restaurant that is part of a hotel. You should tip as you would at home.

Climate



The climate is what makes the islands year-round tourist destinations. It is always near-perfect, with sunny days and cooler evenings. Temperatures average 82° in summer and 77° in winter. The prevailing trade winds, blowing from the east, keep humidity low. Night-time temperatures are in the

70s. The lowest recorded temperature was 61°. Rainfall averages 50 inches annually, but there is no rainy season as such. Even heavy downpours are followed by blue sky. It frequently rains on one side of the island and not the other. The Caribbean hurricane season (late summer and early autumn) does not often affect the USVI, but Hurricane Hugo in September 1989 devastated all three islands. St. Croix was the hardest hit.

CLIMATE CHART		
	Month Average Temp.	Monthly Days of Rain
January	77	4.3
February	77	1.9
March	78	2
April	79	7.5
May	80	1.3
June	82	2.9
July	84	5.6
August	84	4.1
September	83	6.6
October	83	5.6
November	80	6.4
December	78	3.8

Electric Current



US travelers need not bring adapters or converters since current and sockets are identical to those on the mainland.

Tip: If you plan to use your **laptop computer**, it's prudent to bring a **surge protector**.

Time Zones



Atlantic Standard Time, which is one hour earlier than Eastern Standard Time, is in effect year-round.

Newspapers/Broadcast Media



St. Thomas and St. Croix each publish a daily newspaper. Flown in daily are such newspapers as the *The New York Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA/Today.* Prices are very high, so stick to the local papers, which carry mainland news from Associated Press releases. Many hotels carry CNN, HBO and ESPN services. Several hotels provide guests with a seven-page fax of *The New York Times*, including the crossword puzzle.

There are local radio stations and English-language broadcasts from San Juan.

Mail & Shipping

The USVI are part of the US Postal Service. Stamps for first class mail are identical to those on the mainland. There are post offices in Charlotte Amalie (Main Street), Frenchtown and Havensight on St. Thomas. There are post offices in Christiansted, Frederiksted and Gallow's Bay on St. Croix and in Cruz Bay, St. John.

There is a FedEx office at Cyril E. King Airport on St. Thomas. Packages must be in by 5 pm for overnight service. ☎ (340) 777-4140. **Red Hook Mail Services**, Red Hook Plaza (East End), ☎ (340) 779-1890, and **Nisky Mail Center**, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 775-7055, both on St. Thomas, also offer overnight shipping services. FedEx service is provided by **Connections** (near ferry dock) on St. John, ☎ (340) 776-6922. The FedEx office on St. Croix is at **Peter's Rest Commercial Center**, ☎ (340) 778-8180. Check with your hotel concierge for driving directions.

Telephones



Area Codes

USVI area code is 340.

BVI area code is 284.

Local Calls

Local calls from a public phone, which include inter-island calls, cost 35¢ for each five minutes. Calls to the BVI are billed at international rates.

Phone Cards

Phone cards are used throughout the islands. You can buy them in several denominations at many convenience stores. Special card phones are widely available.

Long Distance Calls

AT&T, MCI and Sprint have access codes that make long-distance dialing simple. Some hotels block those codes, however. In that case, ask to be connected to the international operator or make your calls from a pay phone. The following access codes are valid at this writing:

AT&T Direct, ☎ (800) 872-2881

MCI, ☎ (800) 888-8000

Sprint, ☎ (800) 877-8000



AT&T has a state-of-the-art **telecommunications center** across the road from Havensight Mall, Charlotte Amalie. It has 15 telephone booths, fax machines and copy services. ☎ (340) 777-9201.

Cell Phones

If your provider has a roaming agreement, you will be able to use your phone on all three islands. Cingular and Sprint have offices on St. Thomas. Cingular, ☎ (340) 777-7777. Sprint, ☎ (340) 715-5400.

Internet Access

On St. Thomas

WWW

Beans, Bytes & Websites, Royal Dane Mall, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 777-9201.

Little Switzerland Cyber Café, Main Street (2nd floor – above shop), ☎ (340) 776-2010.

Cyber Zone, Port of Sale Mall, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 714-7743.

East End Secretarial Services, Red Hook Plaza, East End, ☎ (340) 775-5262.

On St. Croix

Strand Street Station, Pan Am Pavilion, Strand St. Christiansted, ☎ (340) 719-6245.

Morning Glory Coffee & Tea, Gallow's Bay, ☎ (340) 773-6620.

The Bean Mon, Caravelle Arcade, Christiansted, ☎ (340) 719-2000.

On St. John

Connections, Cruz Bay (near ferry dock), ☎ (340) 776-6922.

Connections, Coral Bay, ☎ (340) 779-4994.

Cyber Café, Market Place, Cruz Bay, ☎ (340) 693-9152.

Expect to pay $4-6 for 30 minutes at the computer.

Holidays



Eat your heart out! Not only do these islands have great weather year-round,, but residents have the time off to enjoy it as well. The 23 official holidays celebrated here are marked by special festivals and events. Those peculiar to one island will be discussed in that island's chapter.

Listed below are the official holidays. Note that banks and post offices, but few shops, close on these days.

January 1 . . . . . New Year's Day
January 6 . . . . . Three King's Day
January 15. . . . . Martin Luther King Day
February . . . . . Lincoln's Birthday (date varies)
March 31 . . . . . Transfer Day
(transfer from Denmark to US in 1917)
March/April . . . . . Holy Thursday, Good Friday,
Easter Monday (dates vary)
May . . . . . Memorial Day (date varies)
June . . . . . Organic Act Day (when islands received
right to elect a legislature, date varies)
July 3 . . . . . Emancipation Day (slaves freed, 1848)
July 4. . . . . US Independence Day
July (end) . . . . . Hurricane Supplication Day
(prayers asking to be spared from hurricanes)
September . . . . . Labor Day (date varies)
October . . . . . Columbus Day/Puerto Rico
Friendship Day
(acknowledges the close ties between the islands)
November 1 . . . . . Liberty Day (freedom of press
from Danish rule, 1915)
November 11 . . . . . Veteran's Day
November . . . . . Thanksgiving Day (4th Thursday)
December 25 . . . . . Christmas Day
December 26 . . . . . Second Day of Christmas

The People



A recent census estimates the population at over 110,000 people. St. Croix's 84 square miles are home to over 54,000 of them, while St. Thomas' 32 square miles house 51,000. Some 4,500 people live on St. John's 19 square miles. Most are **descendants of African slaves** brought here to work on the plantations of old-line European families.

They were joined by "**Frenchies**" from St. Barth early in the 20th century. Fishermen then and now, their small community continues to flourish. You'll notice a sizeable number of **East Indians** in the shops. The islands are often called "the crossroads of the Caribbean" because so many emigrants from islands nearby have moved here. Large numbers have moved from Puerto Rico to St. Croix, where **Spanish** is spoken in the shops and restaurants. Many **Rastafarians** have moved to St. Thomas from Jamaica. Distinctive hair and clothing make them stand out. Shops and restaurants that are owned or cater to Rastafarians are found in the Savan area of Charlotte Amalie, near the old market. Others own farms in the lush north of St. Thomas. They grow organic fruits and vegetables that are sold at farmer's markets. Since the end of World War II, an increasing number of US mainland residents have settled on the islands. Many retire here. The locals call them "**Continentals**."

Language



English, the language of the islands, was spoken here even during Danish rule. However, the intonation and pronunciation are quite different, making it difficult to understand at first. Virgin Islanders speak Creole, a lilting form of English originating from slave days when African tongues blended with the English, French and Dutch of the traders. Just stick with it and you'll get the hang of it quickly.

The influx of immigrants from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic means that Spanish is spoken here as well. St. Croix has the largest number of Spanish speakers.

Traditional Foods



Although you can find restaurants that serve International cuisines, you will enjoy sampling some traditional West Indian foods during your stay. While some family-owned eateries serve the most authentic dishes, you'll find a sprinkling of typical dishes on many menus. Another good way to sample traditional foods is to join in the fun at a typical West Indian barbecue, which is a weekly event at most hotels.

Some island favorites include:

Roti – Islanders' favorite "fast food," rotis are flavorful East Indian flat breads filled with meats or vegetables. They resemble a wrap-sandwich and can be eaten while on the go.

Pate – This is confusing because it is not like liver pâté but rather refers to a pita-style bread that is filled with spiced meats, seafood or vegetables. The pate is baked or grilled and served warm.

Fungi (fongee) – Made from cornmeal and ground vegetables (often okra), fungi is served as a side dish, primarily with seafood.

Whelks – A seasonal seafood similar to escargot.

Conch (conk) – Another local seafood favorite, it is served as an appetizer or entrée, in soups, fritters, salads and grilled.

Callaloo – A thick soup of okra, ham, crabmeat and greens.

Curries and Stews – Goat, mutton and chicken are often used to make curries and stews with local vegetables.

Local fruits – Soursop, used to make ice cream, guava, mango, pineapple, sugar apple, passion fruit and tamarind are delicious.

Bush Tea – Herbal tea brewed using aromatic leaves from locally grown plants. Considered a cure-all for minor ailments.

Flora



While it rains infrequently and water is almost always in short supply, the Virgin Islands support an amazing variety of plant life. In his diary, Columbus described the islands as "very mountainous and very green down to the sea." While huge **cactus** plants flourish, so do 50 varieties of **orchids**. Gardens are filled with trees and flowering plants in a profusion of colors. **Sea grape** and **palm trees** line the beaches, providing shade for sunbathers and roots to anchor the sand. Of all the palm tree varieties, only the **broom palm** is native. You will also find **coconuts**, **dates**, **palmettos** and **royal palms**. Fruit trees, which flourish here, were transplanted by Columbus. They include **mangos**, **soursops**, **genips**, **guavas**, **bananas** and **sugar apples**.

> **Caution:** Never pick green apples growing on trees at the beach nor take shelter under them if it should shower. These are **machineel** trees, poisonous to touch or to taste (signs are sometimes posted). Cattle sheltering under them during rains have lost pieces of skin.

Bougainvillea, vines of bright purple flowers peeking over garden walls, were brought from Brazil in the 1700s by a French sailor, Louis-Antoine de Bougainville. Nobody remembers when the **hibiscus** arrived from Hawaii, but it has flourished. Its apricot, pink, and red and white blossoms are used as centerpieces. **Century plants**, which have small yellow blossoms, grow on their green stalks up to 20 ft. high. Used as Christmas trees here, they blossom only in their 10th and final year of life. Other beautiful, colorful flowers that seem to grow along every roadway are **oleanders**, **frangipani**, **poinsettias**, **flamboyants** and **periwinkles**.



Locals have given some species descriptive names. **Catch and Keep** is a thorny vine that sticks to everything. **Monkey Don't Climb** is a tree whose trunk is full of thorns. The **Nothing Nut** was named – you've got it – because it's good for nothing.

Fauna



Few land animals existed here before Columbus and other Europeans arrived and there are still few species today. The **mongoose** was imported to rid the islands of snakes and rodents that damaged the sugar cane and it did just that. You will often see the small, furry, brown animal scoot across the road. There are several varieties of lizards, including the **iguana**, which is ferocious-looking, but very shy. Birds are most plentiful and colorful. The territorial bird is the **bananaquit** or sugar bird. It has a yellow breast and is often found nibbling on fruit trees. Many birds spend the winter months here (**ospreys**, **kingfishers** and **warblers**), returning to their homes when the weather changes.

In the protected reef offshore, sea gardens thrive, as do sea urchins and hundreds of tropical fish. If you don't scuba dive, visit **Coral World** to get a glimpse of this colorful underwater world.

Packing



What clothing you bring with you will obviously depend on the type of holiday you've planned. Rather than list items to bring, which would reflect my tastes rather than yours, let me pass on some of my observations about the clothing scene. It is very relaxed, with casual chic being the style for nighttime and casual for daytime. You'll want to bring swim

gear (and a cover-up to wear at lunch), shorts, T-shirts and resortwear. Light colors are worn year-round.

You can get as dressed up or be as casual as you like. Some hotels (such as Caneel Bay, St. John) require formal attire at their most upscale restaurant. That means men wear collared shirts, trousers and enclosed footwear. Women can wear anything casually chic. Men might take a sport jacket just in case. Visitors to St. Thomas tend to dress up more than those to St. John or St. Croix. High-season guests tend toward dressier attire than do the off-season visitors. West Indians do not wear shorts in the commercial centers. Most tourists do. Bring a light sweater or shawl for cooler evenings.

Packing Tips

- To prevent suits and dresses from wrinkling in your suitcase, place tissue paper between the garments.
- Transparent zippered plastic bags, sold at five-and-dime stores, are ideal for carrying lingerie, cosmetics and shoes.
- Carry all liquids, shampoos, lotions and the like in plastic bottles. Breakage can ruin your clothes and luggage.
- Don't pack too much. Hotels do have efficient laundry service.
- Don't be a walking drugstore. Various medicines and sundries are sold all over the islands. Do, however, bring enough prescription drugs to last your entire trip.

Getting Married in the USVI



"Destination" weddings have become increasingly popular. The USVI are a good choice. Weddings are easily arranged with little red tape.

The easiest route is to contact the luxurious resorts, such as Caneel Bay (St. John), The Buccaneer (St. Croix) and Frenchman's Reef Resort (St. Thomas). Honeymoon destinations for many years, they now offer wedding packages with many attractive amenities. Staff members work with you to make your wedding memorable.

You can also make your own arrangements or hire local wedding planners and photographers. The islands offer scores of stunning locations for the ceremony. Many couples opt for a beach or hillside overlooking a beach, but you might consider botanical gardens, restored sugar mills, plantation Great Houses and a myriad of historic churches. St. Thomas has a synagogue. A wedding at sea is also an option.

Below is a bare-bones description of what is involved.

1) Contact the Territorial Court and apply for a marriage license application (the application can also be downloaded at www.usvitourism.vi). There is a $50 application fee. Territorial Courts are on St. Thomas (includes St. John) and St. Croix.

2) There is an eight-day wait after the clerk receives the application for the license to be granted. While you can apply by mail, the license must be picked up in person. There is a $50 fee for the license. The court is open 10 am-3 pm weekdays on St. Thomas and Mon through Thurs on St. Croix.

3) Judges of the Territorial Courts officiate at civil ceremonies for a $200 fee.

4) Contact a religious institution, if you'd prefer a religious service.

Territorial Courts

In St. Croix, Box 929 St. Croix, USVI 00821, ☎ (340) 778-9750.

In St. Thomas, Box 70 St. Thomas, USVI 00804, ☎ (340) 774-6680.

Wedding Planners

St. Croix

Island Bride, ☎ (340) 773-3897, www.island-bride.com.

Seaside Weddings, Inc., ☎ (340) 773-9607, www.seaside-wed.com.

Special Occasions in Paradise, ☎ (340) 778-1654, www.occasionsinparadise.com.

St. Thomas

Weddings The Island Way, ☎ (340) 777-6505, www.weddingstheislandway.com.

Forever Weddings, ☎ (340) 776-4132, www.forever-weddings.net.

St. John

Anne Marie Weddings, ☎ (340) 693-5153, www.stjohn-weddings.com.

Bob Davis, ☎ (340) 693-5279, www.stjohnbeach-weddings.com.

The Dept. of Tourism publishes a brochure that details the relevant information. Their website has a marriage license application that can be downloaded. www.usvi-tourism.vi, ☎ (800) 372-8784.

A Capsule History



The original inhabitants of these islands, the peaceful **Arawak Indians**, were conquered by the fierce **Carib tribe**. **Columbus**, on his second voyage, sighted the east point of St. Croix, which he claimed for Spain and named Santa Cruz (Holy Cross). Coming ashore at Salt River (north side), he and his men were promptly attacked by the Caribs and fled. Con-

tinuing his journey north, Columbus sailed by scores of islands – some green and fertile, others barren rock. Assuming that the islands were filled with gold and precious jewels, and that there were thousands of them, Columbus christened them for St. Ursula and her 11,000 virgins.

After Columbus' initial visit, little changed on the islands. The few Indians that lived there were carried off by Spanish explorers to work in the gold mines of South America. In 1625, Dutch and English settlements were established on St. Croix, but these were soon supplanted by **French** settlers under the leadership of **De Poincy**, governor of France's Caribbean possessions. He granted the land to the Knights of Malta, who laid out towns, fortresses and plantations, changing the name to St. Croix. Although the economy failed, the knights left their influence in the layout and architecture that distinguishes the island from the others in the area. France sold the island to **Denmark** in 1733.

The Danes sent settlers to St. Thomas and, after several disastrous journeys, founded a settlement. By 1679, plantations were growing indigo, cotton and tobacco for export to Denmark. There were also slaves working these plantations. Soon the appointed Danish governors found a way to earn some extra cash. They opened up their settlement, with its natural harbor, as a haven for privateers. Thus, **Bluebeard**, **Blackbeard**, **Sir Francis Drake** and others used this safe port and left their marks behind. Warehouses were used to store their booty.

Unfortunately, St. Thomas also became renowned for its slave market – the most active in the Caribbean. Buyers came from the entire region and 123,000 slaves are thought to have changed hands here.

During this time, Denmark declared St. Thomas a free port and it remains so today.

In 1827 King Frederick VI appointed **Peter Von Scholten** governor of the islands. A new breed, Von Scholten learned

Creole, lived with the daughter of a freed slave and petitioned the king to free the slaves.

Finally, he initiated a policy of "gradualism," which eventually would free the slaves. It was too little, too late. Resentment boiled over into rebellion and Von Scholten reacted by granting the slaves freedom.

Although recalled to Denmark and tried, he was finally acquitted. The situation for the slaves was horrible; they were left in abject poverty. Labor riots went on for years and resulted in the burning of Frederiksted (St. Croix).

During the US Civil War, Confederate ships used St. Thomas as a base from which to disrupt shipping. This brought the island's strategic location to the attention of Lincoln. Negotiations began with Denmark and a deal was cut to buy the islands for $7 millon dollars. It was voted down by Congress.

On March 31, 1917, the US finally did buy the Virgin Islands from Denmark for $25 million. The major reason behind the purchase was to prevent them from falling to the Germans, who could use them to disrupt shipping through the Panama Canal. Once acquired, the US ignored the islands and it wasn't until 1927 that residents were granted US citizenship.

The Islands Today



The US Virgin Islands remain today an unincorporated territory of the US. The territory was administered by the Navy until 1931, when it was placed under the supervision of the Dept. of the Interior. The governor of the islands was appointed by the President. Since it was a patronage job, the appointee had no intimate knowledge of the islands and the problems facing them.

In 1954, Congress passed the Basic Organic Act, which provided for a locally elected legislature comprised of 15 members. These serve two-year terms. The Basic Organic Act

still serves as the constitution of the islands. One big plus was that it permitted all federal excise taxes collected from rum sales to be returned to the islands' treasury.

In 1970, the first election for governor took place and **Cyril E. King** won a four-year term. The present governor and legislature oversee the day-to-day operation of the islands.

If you read the local dailies, you will see the major preoccupations. Among them are the need for funds to build better roads, modernize electrical plants, and build desalinization plants. Another concern is controlling construction and development so as to keep the natural environment safe and maintain the West Indian character.

In 1972, the USVI began sending a delegate to Congress. Although voteless, the delegate acts as a lobbyist on behalf of VI interests. Non-voting delegates attend national conventions as well.

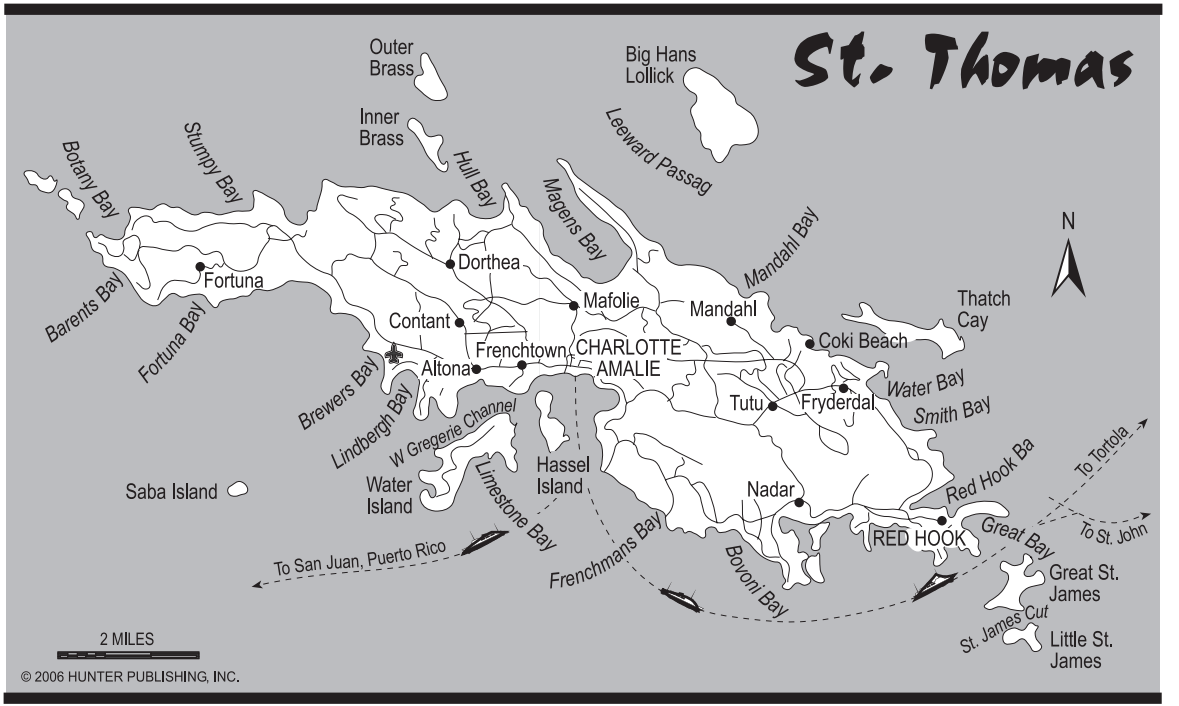
Crime



Virgin Island tourist literature refers to the islands as "The American Paradise" and in many respects that is true. However, there is a worm in the apple of paradise: crime. If you read the local newspapers, you will see how very concerned the islanders are about the escalating crime statistics, particularly on St. Thomas and St. Croix. Though not specifically directed at tourists, crime is a real problem here, where the rate of unemployment exceeds the national average.

What is required of you is the same good sense you would use in your home town. Don't be an obvious target. Don't flash a wad of big bills or wear ostentatious jewelry. Don't wander in the commercial centers or shopping malls late at night. The stretch between the commercial center and the West Indies Dock (St. Thomas), a lovely daytime stroll, should be avoided after dark. Leave your valuables in a safety deposit box, and don't carry large sums of cash in your handbag. Stay near other swimmers on the beach. Keep an eye on your belongings. Always lock your car when parking

it. Crime is a serious matter whenever and wherever it occurs but, with a little common sense, you will have a delightful vacation meeting the 99.99% of the islanders who are gracious hosts.


St. Thomas
Outer Brass
Inner Brass
Big Hans Lollick
Leeward Passag
Botany Bay
Stumpy Bay
Hull Bay
Magens Bay
Mandahl Bay
N
Barents Bay
Fortuna
Fortuna Bay
Dorthea
Mafolie
Mandahl
Thatch Cay
Contant
Coki Beach
Frenchtown
CHARLOTTE AMALIE
Brewers Bay
Altona
Lindbergh Bay
Water Bay
Tutu
Fryderdal
Smith Bay
W Gregerie Channel
Hassel Island
Water Island
Saba Island
Limestone Bay
Nadar
Red Hook Ba
To Tortola
To St. John
RED HOOK
Great Bay
To San Juan, Puerto Rico
Frenchmans Bay
Bovoni Bay
Great St. James
St. James Cut
Little St. James
2 MILES
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St. Thomas



St. Thomas, the second-largest island both in size and in population, draws the largest number of visitors – many of them arriving on the sleek cruise ships that make Charlotte Amalie harbor the busiest port of call in the Caribbean. Many of these visitors return for a longer stay.

The island offers a hybrid vacation. The sun, sea and sand that all Caribbean islands offer are here in abundance, but St. Thomas is also a cosmopolitan and sophisticated oasis boasting a variety of big-city amenities not found elsewhere in the Caribbean.

The island's sophistication is accurately mirrored in the number and variety of first-class restaurants. Nouvelle American and French, Continental and Italian, steak 'n salad and seafood eateries vie for your attention. You'll want to try some West Indian dishes too.

Charlotte Amalie, the island's cosmopolitan capital and commercial center, once the favorite playground of pirates and privateers, now stocks booty garnered in all parts of the world and sold at duty-free prices. Fine gold jewelry, leather goods, stereos and cameras, elegant china and linen are the best buys.

Accommodations on the island include posh resort hotels and chic condominiums on lovely beaches, as well as a good number of small picturesque places scattered on the hillsides overlooking the harbor.

Of course, there is a downside to this. Charlotte Amalie's commercial center is the scene of daily traffic jams and parking can be very tough. Main Street is often crowded with invading tourists from the docked cruise ships, lured from one shop to another by shrill hawkers on the street. The island's sanitation department is hard put to keep up with the litter.

These drawbacks will affect you only minimally and you can savor the best of both worlds. Five minutes from Charlotte

Amalie, the island is flowered and serene. There are quiet, virtually deserted coves where you can unwind, panoramic views to enjoy, and country roads to explore.

Heart-shaped **Magens Bay** is just one of the 20 or so powder beaches on St. Thomas. **Morningstar, Lindbergh** and **Coki** beaches are favorites as well. And the waters that encircle the island offer non-stop action – snorkeling, wind surfing, sailing, and a myriad of other activities. Scuba divers are lured by over 30 superb dive sites in the area and by the well-organized diving programs, while sport fishermen head here because so many record catches were made in local waters.

Terra firma action includes an 18-hole golf course at **Mahogany Run**, where the 14th hole perches on a cliff jutting over the Atlantic Ocean. Tennis courts sprout like mushrooms everywhere.

The natural aquarium at **Coral World** is a must, especially if you are not a diver. It allows you to see the coral reef up close with the strange and exotic fish that inhabit it.

Explore the islands nearby – inhabited and uninhabited – by joining a day-sail for snorkeling and good fun.

When the sun sets, and it always seems to set magnificently over the harbor, you can put on your party clothes and head for one of those gourmet restaurants.

St. Thomas offers lots to do and, with near-perfect weather year-round, you have lots of time to do it.



Getting Here

A prehistoric turtle, head outstretched with pinched waistline, spindly limbs and club-like tail encircled by crystal-blue waters, appears in the distance. A chain of mountains, some stretching as high as 1,500 ft., form its spine.



TIP: Ask for a seat on the left side of your plane for the best view.

This is your initial view of St. Thomas from the window of your plane as it banks to land at picturesque **Cyril E. King Airport**. Named for the first elected governor, it was formerly Harry S. Truman Airport. The tin-roofed arrival terminal served as an Air Force hanger until 1950. The airport has been modernized and the runways extended in the last few years. You'll appreciate these modernizations when you leave, since the departure lounge is now air-conditioned.

Stop for a welcome drink provided by Virgin Island Rum, then head for one of the two baggage retrieval areas. This might be the perfect time to begin winding down your inner clock, no doubt set at a much faster pace than that of the islanders. Limin', the local word for loafing, is the way to approach a vacation anywhere, but especially on the islands.

Several inter-island carriers have niches in this building offering information about air excursions to nearby islands, and all the major car rental agencies (Hertz, Avis, Budget) are clustered near the exits. If you've arrived without reservations (a big mistake in the high season), head for the **Hotel Reservation Desk**, where a helpful person will assist you (free of charge). Nearby is an **Information Center**, where you can pick up some useful literature. Take a copy of ***St. Thomas This Week***, a yellow magazine that has the latest information about special events.

Getting to Your Hotel



By the time the first beads of perspiration appear on your brow, you will be ready for your hotel. If you haven't rented a car (see below), your best bet is to hop in a taxi. The airport is located on the southern shore of St. Thomas, just a 10-minute drive to downtown Charlotte Amalie. Most hotels will be within 25 minutes of the airport. Taxi fares, computed not only by distance but by the number of passengers

riding, are not exorbitant. A typical fare (one passenger) from the airport to Bluebeard's Castle is $6, to Frenchman's Reef $9, and to the East End $13. Several passengers will pay by the seat rather than the car. A local bus stops at the airport and runs into town, but schedules are quite irregular. Large hotels offer shuttle bus service from the airport at a nominal charge.

Airport taxis are all mini-vans.



Getting Around the Island

Car & Jeep Rentals

Renting a car or jeep is highly recommended, for at least part of your stay, so you can explore the island at your leisure. Rentals are easily arranged, since there are lots of agencies and lots of cars to rent. You need a valid US, UK or Canadian driver's license and must be over 21 years of age. Major international companies have kiosks at the airport and other points on the island. Their rates are a bit higher, but they tend to have newer and better equipped cars. Rates here are higher than on the mainland and often you can get a reduced rate by reserving at least one week in advance. Expect to spend about $50 per day and $300 per week (without gas) for a compact car. Most agencies rent both cars and jeeps. Local phone numbers are all in the 340 area code.

Hertz . . . . . ☎ 774-1879

Avis . . . . . ☎ 774-1468

Budget . . . . . ☎ 774-5774

Locally owned companies provide airport pickup service. Cars are uneven in quality, so be specific about your needs. I've had good luck at:

Sun Island . . . . . ☎ 774-3333

Discount . . . . . ☎ 776-4858

Dependable . . . . . ☎ 774-2253

On the East End of the island try **Cowpet Auto Rental**, ☎ 775-7376, or **E-Z Car Rental**, ☎ 775-6255.

Motorcycle & Scooter Rentals

Another way to explore the island is to rent a motorcycle or scooter. Most are Hondas. They seat two people. Daily and weekly rates. Unlimited mileage and a free tank of gas at rental.

Biz Rentals – Havensight Mall, ☎ (340) 774-5840.

Zip Rentals – Red Hook, ☎ (340) 715-1501.

Discount Scooter Rental – Near Airport & at Elysian Resort ☎ (340) 715-3190.

Driving Tips

Traffic keeps to the left, a carry-over from Danish rule. This is confusing at first, but you'll get the hang of it quickly. The 35-mph speed limit (20 in town) gives you time to think about the traffic flow. Roads are all paved, but many are rutted and potholed and the mountain range, which allows for spectacular vistas, makes driving a rollercoaster affair. Roads are not lit and children and adults walk and play along them at night, so stick to daylight exploring.



With an eye to making St. Thomas more driver-friendly, the powers that be have created a logo to help visitors find their way around the island. There are only a few main roads, but they are not well signed. If you ask a local for Route 32, you'll often be met by a blank stare. So look for brightly colored **"Tommy Starfish"** signs in the following colors at the side of the road. He marks the most important routes.

Gold – From the airport, through Charlotte Amalie and Havensight to Red Hook. (Routes 30 and 32).

Green – From Charlotte Amalie to Magens Bay (Route 32).

Blue – From Havensight through Tutu Shopping Mall and along the island's East Coast (Routes 30 and 38).

Yellow – Crown Bay (Sub-base) to Mafolie Hill above town (Route 38).

Red – Four Corners (Mountain Top) across the central mountain chain, to Mahogany Run Golf Course and Smith Bay Road (East End) (Routes 40, 42 and 38).

Parking in Charlotte Amalie

Parking during business hours can be time-consuming. There are small parking areas along the waterfront, but they fill up quickly. The municipal parking lot (east of town, near the fort) is your best bet. There is a charge ($5 maximum for 12 hours) to park from 6 am to 6 pm. Free at other times. There is a above.

Taxis



Large hotels have fleets of cabs, which means one is always available. There are taxi stands on the waterfront, or you can flag cabs on the street. Unfortunately, they do not have meters and, although there is a schedule of official rates that should be posted in the cab, you are rarely quoted the same price twice. Agree on the price before entering the cab. Fares are based on distance and the number of passengers.

A trip from Charlotte Amalie to Red Hook is $10 for one passenger and $8 each for several passengers heading to the same destination. Families can arrange a set rate.

Buses



Vitran, the local company, runs buses from Market Square to Red Hook Dock, leaving on the hour. They have several routes in the downtown area. But they are not dependable and I would not rely on them. Surrey buses also make the run.

Island Tours

Land tours are not a big draw on St. Thomas. They are most popular with cruise passengers, who have only a few hours to spend here. If that's not enough, the concierge desk at your hotel can arrange for a half-day trip around the island. Some tours stop at Coral World and others at Mountain Top, the highest point on the island. The largest tour operator on St. Thomas is **Tropic Tours** (☎ 774-1855). Call them to arrange a two-hour minivan tour. The set fare is $45 for one or two passengers and $15 for each additional passenger.

Hotel taxis also offer private island tours. The cost is about the same ($50), but you'll have more input on the itinerary.

A Capsule History



The Virgin Islands were named by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. The islands were inhabited by the fierce Carib Indians and, after a rude reception on St. Croix, Columbus did not attempt to land here. But he was so impressed by the beauty and huge number of islands, he named them for St. Ursula and her 11,000 virgins.

ST. URSULA



Legends say that Ursula, daughter of an ancient British king, was killed along with her handmaidens by a pagan prince whose attentions she spurned. Another legend blames the evil deed on Huns at Cologne during the Middle Ages. Take your pick.

Although noted on Spanish maps of the New World, no attempt was made to settle the island until 1666 and then it was Denmark that attempted it, not Spain. Troubles

plagued the settlers from the outset – their ship being damaged by storms, then fire, the tiny settlement attacked by pirates, sickness and finally a hurricane.

So, it was not until May 23, 1672, when a group of 104 people landed on St. Thomas, that real settlement took place. Their ship, *The Pharoah*, carried farming tools, furniture, construction materials, experienced planters, a minister, George Iverson (the first governor), and an unsightly group of convicts and ladies of ill repute.

King Christian V, granted a charter to the Danish West India Company to develop the island. They constructed Fort Christian (still standing) and the entire colony lived within its walls. At the same time, plantations were parceled out and tobacco, foodstuffs and sugar cane were planted. Taverns constructed along the waterfront attracted sailors, privateers, and the settlers themselves.

> **Did you know?** The town was called "Tap Hus," or Beer Hall, until 1691, when it was renamed Charlotte Amalie in honor of King Christian's wife.

In 1673, the first shipload of slaves arrived on the island from West Africa to work on the plantations. About 28,000 slaves worked here overall. In 1685, governors Nicolas and Adolph Esmit allowed the island to be used as a pirate refuge and storage center. The pirate's booty was used to make life more comfortable. St. Thomas, so close to the trade route between South America and Europe, was a natural hiding spot for the pirate bands. Pirate legends abound on the island and Drake's Seat, from which Sir Francis watched his men set sail to plunder Spanish galleons, is a popular tourist spot, as is Bluebeard's Castle (now a hotel).

In 1764, King Frederick V declared St. Thomas a free port and prosperous merchants replaced pirates. They built large warehouses on the waterfront and Dronningen's Gade (Main Street) to store the goods being shipped abroad. In the mid-18th century a group of French-speaking farmers and

fishermen arrived from nearby St. Bartholomew. Hundreds of them built their own town on the waterfront just west of Charlotte Amalie. This area, still known as Frenchtown, is filled with restaurants and nite spots.

St. Thomas' fortunes rose and fell with those of Denmark during these years, at some periods prosperous and others just short of ruin. In 1843, Governor Peter Von Scholten granted freedom to the slaves (after a bloody uprising on St. Croix) and the effect on the economy was devastating. Most slaves stayed on the island but preferred to work their own land or labor in town rather than remain on the plantations.

At this time ships began using steam engines rather than sails and the need for restocking supplies diminished. The island stagnated for the rest of the century and it wasn't until 1917 that it again became important. The United States was afraid that Denmark would fall to the Germans during World War I, giving Germany a refueling stop for its ships in the Caribbean. America determined to purchase the islands from the Danes, who had ruled them for over 200 years. The price – $25 million in gold. The change of ownership did little for the people of the islands. But after World War II, St. Thomas' status as a free port, marvelous weather, easy transportation and, finally, the closing of Cuba as a tourist destination brought St. Thomas to its position as the premier stop in the Caribbean, with over a million visitors each year. Many of them return annually.

Carnival



While St. Thomas' Carnival can't match the magic and excitement of Rio's, everyone has a helluva good time. Calypso is king here, and its beat is infectious.

The Carnival tradition was revived in 1952 after a long hiatus, and has grown and flourished. Now a month-long event every April, Carnival activities actually start long before that as floats are designed and constructed; parade groups

plan their costumes; and mocko jumbi troupes (stilt-walkers) compete for the right to strut their stuff at the grand finale parade. You can attend these tryouts.

The week's events leading up to the adult parade include concerts, raffles, a children's parade, boat races and an international calypso tent which draws troupes from other islands, notably Trinidad. Tickets to events at the Lionel Roberts Stadium (near Bluebeard's Hill) run under $10.

The adult parade on the final Saturday wends its way through downtown streets lined with revelers. It's led by the newly crowned and regally garbed King and Queen of Carnival on their 17-ft. stilts, garishly costumed and covered with mirrors.

"Mocko" means make-believe and "jumbi" means spirit or ghost in West Indian patois.

They are followed by steel bands and dancing contingents. All are costumed in gaily colored ensembles which represent a theme. The Gypsy troupe, which has been in every Carnival, has depicted Mexico, Egypt and Tales of Scheherezade. The troupes, supported and financed by local merchants, are judged and prizes are awarded.

The Carnival food fair assembles in Market Square, and the smorgasbord consists of West Indian specialties prepared the way Grandma made'em. Roast pork, pates, fried fish, plantains, roasted goat and johnny cakes are just a sample to whet your appetite.

The grand finale is a fireworks display over the harbor. It's spectacular.

Orientation



St. Thomas' 32 square miles (13 miles long and three wide) make it the second-largest of the US Virgin Islands (St. Croix is larger). It is the seat

of the local government and the most cosmopolitan of the three major islands.

Three small islands lie in Charlotte Amalie's harbor. **Water Island**, now officially the fourth-largest Virgin, has lovely beaches and biking paths. **Hassel Island**, which had a fort on it, is now part of the US National Park. It has hiking trails. **Buck Island** is a wildlife preserve.

St. Thomas is 1,600 miles south-southeast of New York and 1,100 miles south-southeast of Miami. It is part of the Lesser Antilles island chain, which divides the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. Excellent beaches on the north shore are washed by Atlantic waters and others on the south are washed by Caribbean waves. The island is home to 51,000 people – native Virgin Islanders, emigrants from nearby islands and transplanted mainlanders.

Charlotte Amalie

Key Streets

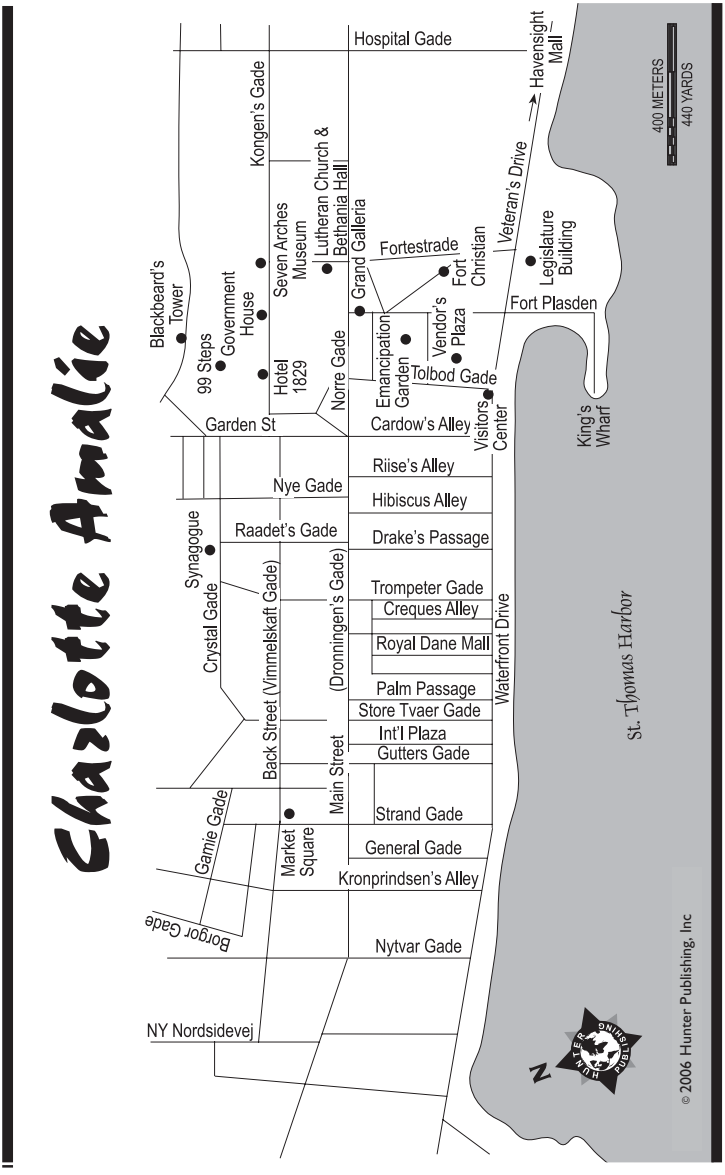
Waterfront Drive

This four-lane thoroughfare girdles the harbor and is the site of monumental traffic jams at 8 am and again at 5 pm. The harbor sidewalk, a lovely promenade with terminals for inter-island ferries and day-charters, was once part of the harbor. Before it was filled in to build the drive, the water came right up to the warehouses that once stored pirate's treasure and now house boutiques.

Local fishermen and farmers hawk their wares at makeshift stalls, and there are kiosks where you can arrange a water-based tour. Across the road, the street is crammed with parked cars, shops, banks and eateries.

Dronningen's Gade (Main Street)

The town's major shopping street runs from Emancipation Park to Market Square. Both sides of the street are crammed with shops selling merchandise garnered from all


Charlotte Amalie
Hospital Gade
Havensight Mall
Kongen's Gade
Blackbeard's Tower
99 Steps
Government House
Seven Arches Museum
Lutheran Church & Bethania Hall
Grand Galleria
Fortestrade
Fort Christian
Veteran's Drive
Legislature Building
Fort Plasden
Hotel 1829
Norre Gade
Emancipation Garden
Vendor's Plaza
Tolbod Gade
Garden St
Cardow's Alley
Visitors Center
King's Wharf
Riise's Alley
Nye Gade
Hibiscus Alley
Synagogue
Raadet's Gade
Drake's Passage
Crystal Gade
Back Street (Vimmelskaft Gade)
(Dronningen's Gade)
Trompeter Gade
Creques Alley
Royal Dane Mall
Waterfront Drive
Palm Passage
Store Tvaer Gade
Int'l Plaza
Main Street
Gutters Gade
Gamle Gade
Market Square
Strand Gade
General Gade
Kronprindsen's Alley
Borgor Gade
Nytvar Gade
NY Nordsidevej
St. Thomas Harbor
400 METERS
440 YARDS
N
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Downtown Charlotte Amalie
© 2006 Hunter Publishing, Inc
N
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1. Fort Christian/The Virgin Islands Museum
2. Legislative Building
3. Vendor's Plaza
4. Emancipation Garden
5. Frederick Lutheran Church
6. 99 Steps
7. Hotel 1829
8. Government House
9. Haagensen House
10. Blackbeard's Tower
11. Seven Arches Museum
12. Beracha Veshalom Vegmiluth Hasidim Synagogue
13. Weibel Museum
14. Market Square
15. Camille Pissaro's Birthplace
Regjering's Gade
Prindsen's Gade
Catholic Church
Methodist Church
Kanal Gade
Kronprindsen's Gade
Nye Tvaer Gade
Bernes Alley
Stoners Alley
Brand Alley
General Gade
Savan Gade
Strand Gade
Waterfront Highway
Fireburn Hill
Guttet's Gade
International Plaza
Palm Passage
Royal Dane Mall
Store Tvaer Gade
Main Street
Library
Wimmelskraft Gade
Snegle Gade
(Dronningen's Gade)
Trompeter Gade
Drake's Passage
Raadet's Gade
Hibiscus Alley
Riise's Alley
Post Office Alley
Post Office
Restrooms
Nye Gade
Crystal Gade
Garden Street
Tolbod Gade
Norre Gade
Kongen's Gade
Lille Taarne Gade
Fort Piedsen
Fortet Strade
U.S. Coast Guard
King's Wharf
500 FEET
150 METERS

parts of the world and sold at "duty-free" prices. Crowded during the day, and bustling with visitors (you'll spot them by the number of shopping bags they are juggling) from the cruise ships that drop anchor daily, a hush falls over the street at 5 pm.

Norre Gade (North Street)

The continuation of Main Street east of Emancipation Park, Norre Gade is home to several of our recommended sights.

Vimmelskaft's Gade (Back Street)

The third block from the harbor, Back Street has fewer shops but several good restaurants and late-night clubs.

The Shopping Alleys

Drake's Passage, **Trompeter Gade**, **Royal Dane Mall** and **Hibiscus Alley** are among the picturesque alleys that connect Waterfront Drive and Dronningen's Gade. Although they've been converted into shopping streets, they retain their cobblestoned walkways and raucous atmosphere.

Frenchtown

A peninsula that juts into the harbor west of downtown Charlotte Amalie, the area was settled by French-speaking fishermen and still retains traces of their community. Today, it houses many fashionable restaurants and night spots.

Sub Base (Crown Bay Marina)

This is another peninsula jutting into the harbor, even farther west of Charlotte Amalie than Frenchtown. The area was named for the base located here during the Second World War. It now has several restaurants and a new cruise ship dock.

Bluebeard's Hill

To the east of the downtown shopping district, Bluebeard's Hill, now the site of a luxury hotel, is the spot where the pi-

rate Bluebeard built a tower so he could watch his pirate bands arrive with their loot. The tower still stands today and commands a striking view of the town, harbor and surrounding areas.

Havensight Mall

East of the commercial center and adjacent to the West Indies Dock (where cruise passengers disembark), Havensight is a bustling shopping area. Most of the shops are branches of well-known downtown stores. There are several small restaurants, a supermarket and the island's best bookstore, Dockside Books. Parking available.

Sights Around The Island

Coral World

Coral World's offshore underwater observatory and its 20 aquarium windows allow non-divers to see the ocean floor and its colorful denizens. There are turtle and stingray pools, a shark shallow and iguana alley. It's a must-stop especially for families with children. On East End Road.

Tutu Park

It's startling to turn from bucolic Route 30 onto Route 38. This mid-island area is the commercial center of St. Thomas. The shopping mall has over 50 shops and a food court. There are cinemas and parking. **Tillett Gardens**, across the road is an artistic and cultural center.

Red Hook

Located at the East End of the island, Red Hook's dock is the main departure point for ferries to St. John and the BVI. When the American Yacht Harbor was built it spurred rapid

growth near the dock. A late-night mecca, there are over a dozen restaurants, boutiques and nightspots here.

Scenic Points

The mountain chain that cuts through the island has created spectacular views. Great island views are from **Drake's Seat** (Route 40), **Estate St.**, **Peter Greathouse** (Route 40), **Mountain Top** (Route 33N) and **Paradise Point** (it is reached by the tramway, opposite Havensight Mall).



You will find more detail on the scenic points in *Sightseeing*.



Sunup to Sundown

Since St. Thomas' weather is great all year, the beaches and waters will be your home during much of the day. You can wile away your time horizontally on a lounge turning a glowing shade of brown and devour your favorite thriller; or you can immerse yourself in the sports scene which is so much a part of St. Thomian life. Watersports are in the forefront, with snorkeling, scuba diving, windsurfing, sailing, water-skiing and deep-sea fishing all well organized.

The challenging 18-hole golf course at Mahogany Run is open to the public. The island has excellent tennis facilities, with a variety of surfaces, and many courts lit for night play.

You can take a glass-bottom boat tour, sail off to St. John on a catamaran, fly over the island on a helicopter or explore the nearby waters in a small submarine. Coral World, an in-water aquarium, is a great stop and the view of Magens Bay from Drake's Seat or Mountain Top is stunning. You can explore the island in a jeep, a taxi or on a scooter. You'll want to leave yourself some time to walk through historical Charlotte Amalie and, of course, to shop. Let's start with the surf and sand.

The Best Beaches

Magens Bay Beach (Northside)



The view of Magens Bay from distant hotel terraces and scenic roadside rest areas is stunning and you won't feel disappointed when you find yourself on the wide sandy beach ringed with palm trees. On the island's lush northside, the heart-shaped bay is framed by mountain peaks to the east and west, and there are no hotels or condos in the area. The water here is clear and calm, so it's great for children and less experienced swimmers. There is some snorkeling at the far west end. As a premier tourist stop, Magens Bay can be crowded when cruise passengers arrive and also on weekends. It is the only beach on the island that is operated as a Virgin Island park. The beach bar is famous for its pizza and its frozen drinks. The drive from Charlotte Amalie (along Route 35) crosses the island's central mountain range.

Facilities: Picnic tables, changing rooms, salt-water showers and rentals of watersports gear, chairs and mats. Parking fee $5.



Stop at **Udder Delight** near the entrance for local ice cream or a milk shake laced with Cruzan rum.

Morning Star Beach (South Shore)

Closer to Charlotte Amalie and easily reached by taxi, Morning Star, on the island's southern (Atlantic) shore, lies below Frenchman's Reef Hotel. A smaller sister resort, Morning Star, is at the far end of the sand strip. Bustling with hotel guests, this is a great beach for families, with gentle waves and a long expanse of sand to play on. It has a very active watersports center where you can rent gear and arrange for parasailing, windsurfing and waterskiing. The hotel's tennis courts are on the beach. They can be reserved by non-guests. The tennis shack sells suntan products.

Facilities: Watersports rentals. Several eating options and a bar.

Coki Beach (Northeast)

Coki Beach, adjacent to Coral World, is reputed to have the best snorkeling on the island. Small and with packed sand, Coki is not as attractive as the other beaches, but snorkelers are more interested in the very clear water and dazzling coral reef than the sand. Local dive instructors use this beach for shore diving, open-water training and resort courses. You can also water-ski and Jet Ski here.

The entrance to Coki Beach is crowded. There are several beach huts serving Caribbean specialties that can be eaten at umbrella-covered tables. You can also have your hair braided. Because Coki Beach is adjacent to Coral World, there are always taxis here as well. Look for the Coral World turnoff from Route 38.

Facilities: Watersports rentals, changing facilities.

Vessup Bay Beach (East End)

Rather isolated and therefore pristine, Vessup is a series of wide rugged beach strips separated by rocky outcroppings that you can climb over or wade around. Century plants, prickly pear cactus and bristly catch and keep bushes provide cover for the homes nearby giving the beach a deserted feel. It's a protected bay and the craze here is kiteboarding. Windsurfing is a close second. **West Indies Windsurfing and Watersports Center** at one end of the beach rents gear for the above and gives lessons. Other beach toy rentals as well. **Alex's Latitude 18** restaurant is nearby. Follow Route 322 from Red Hook.

Facilities: Watersports rentals.

Sapphire Beach (East End)

Sapphire Beach is a long tree-lined strip known for its clear, calm waters. It's perfect for snorkelers. There's an active watersports program where you can rent Sunfish, windsurfers, ocean kayaks and Wave Runners. There's a marina here as well. Sunday afternoons find the island's best reggae bands on the beach. They draw crowds to the beach and restaurants. You can head to the far side of the beach if you prefer. Off Route 38.

Facilities: Rental of snorkel gear and other watersports equipment. Restaurant.

Secret Harbour Beach (East End)

This is a lovely beach studded with palm trees. It fronts a condominium resort. There is a floating platform offshore that guests can swim to and there is very good snorkeling at the rocky point of the beach. Off Route 322 near Red Hook.

Facilities: Gear rentals and instruction. Restaurant.

Great Bay Beach (East End)

Known for its excellent windsurfing, Great Bay Beach (formerly Bluebeard's Beach) is a stunning white-sand beach that fronts the Ritz Carlton Hotel. Interspersed with seagrape trees, cacti and agave plants are clusters of rocks that break the beach into sections. The sand strip is long enough so you don't have to sunbathe with hotel guests. It faces Vessup Bay and offers views of sailboats en route to St. John. Follow Route 322 from Red Hook.

Facilities: Watersports rentals, restaurants.

Hull Bay Beach (Northside)

On the Atlantic coast, this is the island's premier board surfing beach. Conditions are favorable only from December through March. At other times of the year the waters are calm and local fishermen anchor here. There are no rentals.

The beach bar and restaurant serves pizza, ribs and rotis. Pool and darts.

Facilities: No rental or changing facilities.

Lindbergh Beach (Southwest)

Across the road from the airport, Lindbergh Beach is located on a quiet bay. The beach is quite long and dotted with shade trees. It's a good spot for inexperienced but game snorkelers who can swim out to the small islands in the bay and explore the coral reef.

Facilities: Rentals and food available through Island Beachcomber Hotel. Children's playground.

Brewer's Beach (Southwest)

Near the College of the Virgin Islands, Brewer's draws a young, lively crowd. Lots of music, ball and frisbee playing and splashing. It's the best beach on St. Thomas for gathering seashells. Some nude and topless bathing.

Facilities: Trucks sell food and drinks. No amenities.

More Beaches?

Bolongo Bay Beach (Southside) is a pebbled beach strip dotted with palm trees. The resort has an active watersports program and non-guests can rent, take a day-sail or join the St. Thomas Diving Club program. **Iggie's Beach Bar** has hard-fought beach volleyball games and good food. Follow Route 30 from Charlotte Amalie.

Cowpet Bay Beach (East End) is a great windsurfing beach. Watersports center rents gear and gives lessons. Route 38 near Red Hook.

Honeymoon Beach (Water Island) is a secluded beach on the island's west coast. There are food vendors on weekends; otherwise bring a picnic lunch and blankets. There are bathrooms. Take ferry from Tickles in Crown Bay Marina.

Bordeaux Bay and **Stump Bay** are adjacent to one another on St. Thomas' underdeveloped northwest coast. Quiet and isolated weekdays, so don't swim if you are solo. No facilities.

Nude & Topless Beaches

Officially nude or topless bathing is not permitted in the USVI, but clothing-optional beaches do exist – discreetly.

Little Magens Bay, adjacent to Magens Bay Beach, is the primary stop. A marked trail from the main beach leads to this separate area. Favored by gay and lesbian visitors. No facilities.

Lindquist Beach, near the Point Pleasant Resort, sees sun worshippers of all ages on weekdays but weekends bring more families and nude bathing is frowned on. Beach parties and volleyball on Sat, 11 am-3 pm. Entrance is through a dirt road near the Pavilion and Pools Hotel. No facilities.

Picnic lunches are often better than the usual fare served at beach snack bars. To pick up a gourmet lunch (or dinner), head to **Gourmet Gallery**. A specialty shop, its deli department sells imported meats and cheeses and prepared salads. It is also a specialty grocer selling items from caviar to wine. There are two locations: at Crown Bay Marina, ☎ (340) 776-8555, and at Havensight Mall, Bldg IV, ☎ (340) 774-4948. Other good choices include the **Presto Marketplace** at Frenchman's Reef Hotel and the **Burrito Bay Deli** at The American Yacht Harbor, Red Hook, ☎ (340) 775-2944.

Scuba



The scuba industry was born here after World War II, when several frogmen who had been stationed on the island decided to

stay. They realized that the pollution-free waters combined with brilliant sunlight made for outstanding underwater visibility. They also knew that there were over 30 diving areas within easy reach of the island, ranging from shallow coral reefs for novices to shipwrecks, coral caves, underwater tunnels and pinnacles for beginner and experienced divers. You can't eat potential, however, and 25 years passed before scuba diving boomed and the excellent conditions were discovered by large numbers of divers. The long wait worked to your advantage, for it permitted the frogmen and other scuba schools to organize the "industry" particularly well. You can take a mini-scuba course, which will enable you to shallow dive (with an instructor) over a colorful coral reef amid schools of darting fish. You can enroll in a series of classes that will lead to your certification or you can hone your skills working with outstanding instructors. Underwater photography is another facet you might explore. Specially built scuba ships (that permit overnight jaunts) are a recent innovation.



Dive packages are among the most inexpensive vacations on the island. Check them out.

Over 30 dive sites are listed by the scuba schools, and some are exceptional. The most popular and best-known spots are to the south and east of the island, with those to the west quickly gaining in popularity.

Western Dive Sites

Sail Rock

A spectacular boulder, nine miles from the harbor in water that is super clear, with visibility often reaching 150 ft. Coral, encrusted sponges, seafans, miniature barracuda, hawksbill turtles and a myriad of marine life inhabit the area. Four underwater pinnacles form canyonways to explore.

Saba Island

Saba has three different dive sites and a variety of shallow and medium-depth coral reefs for exploration and photographing.

Grain Wreck

An unmarked site where a 450-ft. steel cargo ship sank in 130 ft. of water. Restricted to expert divers, the wreck is inhabited by snappers and jawfish.

Southeastern Dive Sites

Packet Rock

A submerged rock ledge on which the ***Warrick***, a packet ship, came to rest when it sank in 1816. You can find tiles and other artifacts. ***Cartanser Senior***, nearby, is another popular wreck. This small cargo vessel sits in 50 ft. of water and has very good visibility.

French Cap Cay

A rocky pinnacle in water with visibility up to 120 ft. It's inhabited by eagle rays, barracuda and horse-eye jacks. One corner of the pinnacle has colorful tube sponges and gorgonian fans.

Cow & Calf

St. Thomas' #1 spot is a labyrinth of stone tunnels, giant boulders and coral reefs inhabited by a vast assortment of reef fish. Good for underwater photographers.

Northern Dive Sites (Atlantic Ocean)

Thatch Cay

Has three or four dive spots, but the best is the stone tunnel at the island's western tip. An underwater passageway goes right under the island, exiting on the opposite shore. Nearby, the ***General Rogers*** wreck lies in 60 ft. of water. Its hull is covered with invertebrates.

Carvel Rock

This rocky pinnacle descends steeply to 90 ft. The slope is covered with coral, gorgonian fans, sea whips and sponges. Large tarpons, mantas, tuna and eagle rays inhabit the area.

There are many more sites at Carvel, which the schools will discuss with you if you are a strong diver.

Diving Schools/Centers

There are many full-service dive centers on St. Thomas. Their services include daily beach and boat dives as well as professional instruction for beginners or certified divers. They offer PADI certification, open water certification, Nitrox training, underwater photography and night dives. Experienced divers should inquire about dives to "The Wreck of the *Rhône*," which lies in BVI waters. You can also rent equipment. While their services overlap, they are not identical, so if you have something specific in mind check several schools. The following centers have impeccable credentials:

St. Thomas Diving Club

Bolongo Bay, ☎ (340) 776-2381, www.st-thomasdivingclub.com, offers dive/hotel packages. Organizes divers by skills, so beginners head to shallow wrecks and coral reefs, while the more experienced head to offshore pinnacles and deeper wrecks.

Chris Sawyer Dive Centers

Red Hook and Compass Point Marina, ☎ (340) 777-7804, www.sawyerdive.vi. Specializes in dive trips to the *Rhône*. Excellent beginning scuba class. Retail shop at American Yacht Harbor.

Dive In

Sapphire Beach Resort, ☎ (340) 777-5255, www.diveinusvi.com. Focusses on sites near St. John and St. Thomas' north and south coasts. Certification courses.

Blue Island Divers

Crown Bay Marina, ☎ (340) 774-2000, www.blueislanddivers.com. Specializes in Nitrox training and Nitrox diving specialties such as Tec Rec.

Coki Beach Dive Club

Smith's Bay, ☎ (340) 775-4220, www.cokidive.com. Beach dives for inexperienced divers. Small groups allow for more personal service.

Aqua Action

Secret Harbour Resort, ☎ (340) 775-6285, www.aadivers.com. Daily boat dives, introductory courses and night dives.

Water World Outfitters

Havensight Mall, ☎ (340) 774-3737, www.scubadivevi.com. Top-of-the-line scuba and snorkel equipment and its "Underwater Safaris" Dive Center offers PADI instruction as well as daily dives.

Scuba for the Physically Challenged

Carl Moore, owner of the **Aqua Action Dive Shop**, teaches scuba diving to physically disabled visitors. He is a certified instructor of the Handicap Scuba Association. For more information, ☎ (340) 775-6285. The **Admiralty Dive Center** at the Holiday Inn also provides diving opportunities and PADI certification for persons with mobility impairments or impaired vision. ☎ (340) 777-9802.

Sea Trekking (Snuba)

Sea trekking, often-called Snuba, combines aspects of scuba diving and snorkeling. Participants wear sea trekking helmets that provide air and allow communication with the guide while keeping heads dry. The group walks on the floor of the Caribbean to see the stunning coral reefs, tropical fish and unique aquatic life. An expert guide leads the group along the trail, which has a handrail, and ranges from 12 to 30 feet below the water line. It's good family fun since children as young as eight can participate. Reservations are required. Call Coral World at ☎ (340) 775-1555, ext. 249.

BOB (Breathing Observation Bubble)

For another unique underwater experience, join an excursion on the 60-foot, custom-built "BOB" boat and enjoy a guided tour on a personal underwater motor scooter. A helmet supplies air and you do not have to know how to dive. The half-day trip also includes snorkeling. Fee $100. Based at Port of Sale Mall, Havensight, ☎ (340) 715-0348, www.bobusvi.com. Also at Waters Edge, American Yacht Harbor, Red Hook, ☎ (340) 771-7356, www.watersedgesports.com.

Snorkeling



The crystal clear waters offer unparalleled visibility and allow even novice snorkelers to explore multi-colored reefs and tropical marine life. Snorkel lessons are given in the pools of many resorts. They are free to guests. Beach dives are popular and **Coki Beach** has the best snorkeling environment. Its reef is close to shore and, because of its proximity to Coral World, it has lots of colorful fish. **Lindbergh Bay Beach** has several coral reefs at easily reachable cays offshore.

Snorkel gear is a staple at hotel watersports kiosks, where it is often offered to guests free of charge. Non-guests pay a

nominal fee. If you prefer to buy gear, head to the **Chris Sawyer Dive Shop** in the American Yacht Harbor Complex or **Water World Outfitters** in Havensight Mall.

The best snorkel experiences are part of day-trips to St. John and uninhabited cays nearby. Some trips visit the waters of the BVI. Sailboats are the most popular, but trips on power boats have risen in popularity.

Sea Breathe Underwater Snorkeling

This is a perfect intermediate step between snorkeling and scuba diving. It's diving for non-divers from a boat or a beach. "Divers" are provided with a floating air supply and guided on a one-hour dive with a maximum depth of 20 feet. Adults and children (provided they are competent swimmers). Contact **Pocket Yachts** at Sapphire Beach Marina, ☎ (340) 690-6015. Expect to pay $50.



For more snorkeling fun see *Virgin Island Ecotours*, page 68.

Sailboat Day-Charters



There's more to a St. Thomas vacation than the sand and shops. You'll really hate yourself if you don't sail to St. John or one of the nearby islands for a day of sunshine, salty air, great snorkeling, plenty of food and drink and lots of fun. The simplest way to do this is on a day-charter. Needless to say, the island has scores of day-charter options. Many people arrive in St. Thomas with snorkeling gear in tow but, if you're low on space, gear is available on day-sail boats and yacht charters. Some long-time favorites follow.

True Love

Built in 1926, the 54-foot schooner *True Love* was featured in the Grace Kelly film *High Society*. Beautifully maintained, it speeds out to sea, passing dozens of cays, till it drops anchor

for a champagne buffet lunch and an afternoon of snorkeling, swimming and shell gathering. ☎ (340) 513-0655, www.sailtrue.com.

Nightwind

Capt. Steve Marsh takes small groups to St. John and nearby cays on his 50-foot yawl *Nightwind*. Continental breakfast and buffet lunch. ☎ (340) 775-4110, www.sailyachtnightwind.com.

Independence

A custom-built CSY 44, the *Independence* is captained by Pat Stoeken, who also lives aboard. The yacht carries six passengers and food and drink are included. Your destination is wherever winds and whims dictate. ☎ (340) 775-1408, www.independence44.us.

Heavenly Days

This 53-foot catamaran sails from Bolongo Bay Marina for a six-hour trip to St. John National Park and nearby Honeymoon Beach. Swimming, snorkeling, a buffet lunch and complimentary bar. It also does two-hour harbor cruises at sunset. ☎ (340) 775-1800, www.bolongobay.com.

Lou

Capt. Max (Maxine) started sailing in the Greek Islands but has sailed her classic sloop *Lou* in these waters for many years. It is stocked with first-rate snorkel gear from Chris Sawyer's Dive Center and instruction is offered. *Lou* carries up to six people on its way to St. John and nearby cays. ☎ (340) 775-7467.

Daydreamer Coconut

A multi-hulled sailboat with shallow draft so it can tuck in close to shore, *Daydreamer Coconut* sails to Jost Van Dyke

on a full-day excursion. Snorkeling at a deserted cay starts the day, which is followed by lunch at a beachside restaurant on the island. More snorkeling follows at some of the island's pristine beaches. Half-day and sunset cruises too. ☎ (340) 775-2584, www.daydreamervi.com.



Proof of citizenship is required in the **British Virgin Islands**.

Rumbaba

A 37-foot Hunter Legend captained by Bobby Alcott leaves daily from the American Yacht Harbor for a day of snorkeling and swimming. The boat is equipped with hi-tech snorkel gear and flotation vests. A gourmet lunch is prepared by the first mate, Karen. ☎ (340) 690-1659, www.rumbaba-charter.com.



Charter boats and **day-sails** based in St. Thomas will pick up guests staying on St. John.

Powerboat Day-Charters



Powerboats can cover greater distances so most trips head to the waters of the Sir Francis Drake Channel and islands of the British Virgin Islands.

Limnos Charters

Limnos uses 53-foot twin engine catamarans to carry passengers from St. Thomas to The Baths on Virgin Gorda and The Caves on Norman Island. The boats have two decks for sunning. The trip covers 70 miles. Don't forget your passport. Limnos leaves from Compass Point Marina. ☎ (340) 775-3203, www.limnoscharters.com.

Stormy Petrel & Pirate's Penny

Custom-built 42-foot yachts that can carry up to 12 passengers en route to Virgin Gorda for shopping, to The Baths for snorkeling and to Cooper Island for lunch. All are BVI destinations. Friendly crewmembers who've been plying these waters for 25 years offer historical insights. Bring your passport. ☎ (340) 775-7990, www.charterboat.vi.

Shag Me

Shag Me, a sporty 36-foot Cobalt poweryacht, is captained by Kelly Klicker. There is no set itinerary and guests plan their own excursion, be it action-packed snorkeling or beach and nature walks. Lots of water toys. ☎ (340) 513-0235, www.shagexcursions.com.



Bring a **towel**, **hat** and **sunscreen** when setting out on a day-trip on the water. There is a $25 customs fee for those going to the BVI and a passport, birth certificate or government-issued photo ID are required.

Sportfishing



Perched on the edge of the Puerto Rican trench, the Virgin Islands offer some of the finest fishing grounds in the world. The waters are home for such challenging sportfish as blue and white marlin, wahoo, tuna, dolphin fish (mahi mahi), kingfish and snook, among others. Over 24 world records have been set here, but you don't have to be a world-class angler to have a lot of fun. There are half-day and full-day charters for deep-sea fishing and in-shore fishing of bonefish, grouper, mackerel and snapper. You can keep your catch and have the crew filet it for you.

Blue marlin, the most sought-after catch, draws fishermen from all over the world for the Open Atlantic Blue Marlin

Tournament, which is televised by ESPN's Big Game Fishing World Series. Prime time for marlin is July and August.

Half-day trips usually run from 8 am to 2 or 1 pm to 5 pm, while a full-day trip is usually 8 am to 4:30 pm. Bring sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, camera and some food. Drinks are served and all tackle and equipment are provided.

Fish Hawk II

Leaves from a private marina near Compass Point. It's a 48-foot fiberglass boat captained by Al Petrosky. ☎ (340) 775-9058.

Marlin Prince

Leaves from American Yacht Harbor. Specializes in trips to the "North Drop" area, which is the Atlantic Ocean's deepest point. Fine equipment. ☎ (340) 693-5929, www.marlin-prince.com.

Fins Up

Leaving from Sapphire Beach Marina, it's a 40-foot Luhrs with tournament-grade tackle and a fighting chair. It has an air-conditioned salon. In-shore fishing trips as well. ☎ (340) 998-1505, www.finsup.info.

Black Pearl Charters

A variety of boats with captains and mates that have 30 years of offshore fishing experience. Bait and tournament-class tackle provided. Trips to North Drop for marlin. Based at Sapphire Beach Marina. ☎ (340) 775-9982, www.sportfishingvi.com.

Double Header Sportfishing

Double Header I and *II* are twin 32-foot center-console open fishing boats that have been designed for these waters. In-

shore and offshore trips catching everything from tarpon to marlin. Sapphire Beach Marina. ☎ (340) 777-7317, www.doubleheadersportfishing.net.

Peanut Gallery Sportfishing

The Peanut, a 28-foot prowler with state-of-the-art electronics, is powered by twin engines. Light tackle fishing 45 minutes to the north or 25 minutes to the South Drop, or a 10-minute trip to in-shore fishing spots. Offer trips from two to eight hours. Crown Bay Marina. ☎ (340) 775-5274, www.fishingstthomas.com.

Charter Yachts



Charter yachting, once strictly for the very rich, is a popular option here. Whether prompted by a classic film (*The Four Seasons*) or a strong desire to put "civilization" behind them for a while, many people now enjoy cruising vacations. St. Thomas and Tortola (BVI) are headquarters for yacht rental agencies, marinas, anchorages and provision shops. Minimum rentals are usually a week, but shorter rentals can be arranged off-season. There are two types of charters available – bareboat and crewed.

Bareboat or Crewed?

A bareboat charter involves a fully equipped boat with no crew or captain. You operate as the captain and the members of your party are the crew. Before you are permitted to charter a bareboat, you must furnish proof of your competence and cruising experience. You will be asked to complete a resumé detailing your boating background and testing your knowledge of anchoring and coastal navigation. If you can supply references from a sailing club, that will help. For your own safety, don't try to inflate your skills. If you are uncertain, arrange for a skilled captain to sail with you for a few days. Rates vary with the size of the boat and the season. Rates are lowest in August, September and October.

A crewed boat charter has a professional crew, which includes a captain and a cook. You can work with the captain to determine your itinerary. Crewed boats include such sailing ships as sloops, ketches, yawls, schooners and catamarans, as well as power boats. Work with a yacht broker to determine the best size and any particular needs you have. Again, rates vary by size, age of the ship, length of charter and your itinerary.

Booking a Charter

If reading this section plants a seed in your mind, get information immediately. Arrangements should be made and confirmed long in advance of your arrival – often as long as a year in advance. This is particularly true if you want to charter during major holidays such as Christmas/New Year's, Lincoln's and Washington's Birthdays, Easter and Thanksgiving. At these times a minimum charter of one week is usual. Consider chartering in late spring, summer, or early autumn, when rates are lower and anchorages in the area are underutilized.

Stocking Your Boat

Food and drinks (fuel too) are included in crewed yacht rates and, unless you have some special needs or nighttime urges, you can discuss stocking with your captain. Often, he will arrange for some meals ashore as well (split provisioning). If you intend to provision your own yacht, rest assured that there are many marinas with full provision shops and other islands have small shops. Major provision shops are found in Charlotte Amalie, Cruz Bay (St. John), Christiansted (St. Croix), Road Town (Tortola), and in The Valley and on North Sound (Virgin Gorda).

Charter Operators/Agents

Contact the following organizations to get details on how to proceed.

The Virgin Islands Charteryacht League, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 774-3944 or (800) 524-2061, www.vicl.org.

Flagship, Charlotte Amalie, ☎ (340) 774-5630, www.flagship.com.

Admiralty Yacht Vacations, St. Thomas, ☎ (340) 774-2172 or (800) 910-5228, www.admirals.com.

Cruising in Paradise, Patchogue, NY, ☎ (631) 207-1040 or www.cruisinginparadise.com.

Jolly Mon Sailing, La Quinta, CA, ☎ (760) 564-7724 or (800) 565-5984, www.jollymonsailing.com.

Stewart Yacht Charters, Red Hook Plaza, St. Thomas, ☎ (340) 775-1358 or (800) 432-6118, www.stewartyachtcharters.com.

St. Thomas Yacht Club, Cowpet Bay, ☎ (340) 775-6320 or www.styc.net.

St. Croix Yacht Club, Teaque Bay, ☎ (340) 773-9531.

Windsurfing, Kiteboarding & Surfing



The steady trade winds that moderate temperatures here also make windsurfing and kiteboarding a lot of fun. Called boardsailing here, windsufing is very popular. On weekends, St. Thomians flock to their favorite beaches to practice or race. Windsurfers can be rented at resort hotel's watersports centers and at many beaches. Kiteboarding is newer and not as easy to find.

Windsurfers should head to the island's eastern shore. **Sapphire Beach**, **Great Bay Beach** and **Smith Bay** are favorite spots. **Morning Star Beach** at Frenchman's Reef is another popular place.

Kiteboarding is most popular at **Vessup Beach** near Red Hook. The watersports center here rents equipment and gives lessons.

Body surfers should go to **Hull Bay** on the island's north coast, where Atlantic Ocean waves roll in. The winter months are best. Rentals go quickly so bring your own board. For a change of pace, head to **Sprat Bay** on Water Island, which gets waves between six and eight feet in winter.

Small Boat & Water Toy Rentals



Caribbean Water Sports manages the watersports centers at many of the island's resort hotels. In addition to windsurfers, sailboats and waverunners, they have motorized dinghies and Sun Kats (electric powered catamarans for two). Not all equipment is at each location so it's best to call them. ☎ (340) 775-9360, www.viwatersports.com.

Waters Edge at the American Yacht Harbor is your best bet for small power boat rentals, including Boston Whalers and Makos. ☎ (340) 771-7356.

Fan Fare Charters rents small sailboats ranging from 20 to 50 feet by the day or week. Snorkel gear and floats are provided. ☎ (877) 715-1373, www.fanfarecharters.com. Fan Fare is located at Vessup Point Marina.

Nauti Nymph at American Yacht Harbor rents powerboats that can hold six to eight people. They can be outfitted with snorkel gear or with water-skiing gear. ☎ (800) 734-7345, www.st-thomas.com/nautinymph.

Parasailing



You can go hot air ballooning, hang-gliding or parasailing with **Caribbean Parasail and Watersports**. They pick up at all major hotels, on the waterfront, West Indies Dock and American Yacht Harbor. ☎ (340) 775-9360, www.viwatersports.com. The **Adventure Center** at Marriott Frenchman's Reef offers parasailing over Morning Star Beach. ☎ (340) 774-2992.

Eco-Tours



Virgin Island Ecotours runs 2½-hour guided kayak trips through the Virgin Islands Marine Sanctuary on St. Thomas' East End. The tours are led by experienced naturalists. The kayaks are designed for two people, who sit on top. Learn about the natural history and ecology of the Mangrove Lagoon and share the sanctuary with egrets, jellyfish, seahorses and juvenile reef fish. Great for children, since they'll learn to recognize individual species and observe them in their natural habitats. Snorkel gear is provided.

Another popular trip is the Explore Cas Cay Wildlife and Marine Sanctuary. You take a small boat to this pristine off-shore island where you go on an easy hike observing hermit crabs and visiting a tidal pool and blowhole. You can snorkel the mangrove lagoon reef from the beach. Kids will enjoy the Pirate Treasure Hunt and inflatable boat ride. Snorkel gear provided. Virgin Island Ecotours is located on Route 38 near Compass Point Marina. Reservations are required. ☎ (340) 779-2155.

A Submarine Experience

A new adventure awaits 48 curious voyagers as the 65-foot air-conditioned *Atlantis XV* submarine goes below the water for its tour of the coral reef. Exotic fish, sponge gardens and unusual coral formations are just beyond your viewing port. The *Atlantis* is certified to dive to 85 feet by the US Coast Guard. The trip is narrated. It lasts two hours, with one hour submerged. Children must be at least three feet tall. There are several routes and several trips daily. The harbor cruiser that takes you to Turtle Cove, to board the sub, leaves from the West Indies Dock at Havensight. Reservations are required. ☎ (340) 776-5650, www.atlantis-adventures.com.

Screamin' Eagle Jet Boat

Like a roller coaster ride in the water, this 30-foot bright yellow jet boat is powered by twin 350 hp turbo-charged engines. Built in Australia, it can move fast (up to 46 mph), stop within a boat length and perform 180- and 270-degree turns on a dime. Powerful water jets, not propellers, allow for the speed and maneuverability. *The Eagle* leaves from the dock at Havensight Mall and heads to Hassel Island, Gregorie East Channel, Lundberg Bay and Frenchtown. Expect to get wet and to laugh a lot. The trip lasts 40 minutes. Children must be over 3½ feet tall. Adults fee is $39, children pay $35. Contact: **Atlantis Adventures**, Havensight Mall, ☎ (340) 776-5650.

Golf



The 18-hole golf course that opened at **Mahogany Run** in December 1980 may not be the most challenging or prestigious, but it could be among the most beautiful courses anywhere. Set mid-island, the course takes full advantage of the rolling terrain, valleys and trees. Magnificently landscaped and constantly manicured, the greens are near-perfect. Designed by Tom and George Fazio, who have designed several courses on the mainland, it has a variety of holes – ocean-front, lake-front and up and down hill. The course's challenging holes are laid out on 6,525 yards of lush green turf and par is 70. The celebrated 14th hole is perched on a cliff jutting out over the Atlantic Ocean. There is a pro shop; clubs and shoes can be rented. Call two days in advance for tee times.

Fees vary with season and the number of holes played. There is twilight golf as well. The course opens at 7 am. ☎ (800) 253-7103 for information or (703) 777-6006 ext. 1 for tee times. www.st-thomas.com/mahogany.

You cannot walk the course. You must rent a cart.

Tennis

Tennis is popular here and you will find courts at virtually every major hotel, as well as some public courts. There are a variety of surfaces and most courts can be lit for night play. Many hotels allow non-guests to reserve court time. Expect to pay $10-15 per court, per hour. Many tennis programs are run by international pros and lessons are offered. Fees vary. Reservations are required in all cases.

Marriott Frenchman's Reef, ☎ (340) 776-8500.

The Ritz Carlton, ☎ (340) 775-3333.

Bolongo Bay Beach Club, ☎ (340) 775-1800.

Sapphire Beach Resort, ☎ (340) 775-6100.

Mountain Biking



Cycling is not popular here since hills are steep and roads have plenty of potholes and few shoulders. Your best bet is to join **Water Island Adventures** on its cycling tour of this pristine island. The adventure lasts half a day. The "bike bus" takes you to the highest point on the island and you cycle down around WWII forts, flower-filled hillsides and onto Honeymoon Beach. Ferry fare, helmets, 18-speed bikes, water and a guide are included in the $60 fee. The trip starts at Crown Bay Marina. ☎ (340) 775-5770.

Hiking



Take an early ferry to **St. John's National Park**, where there are several guided hikes of varying difficulty and length offered daily. ☎ (340) 776-6201 for schedules.

Beach Volleyball

Head to **Bolongo Bay Beach**, where there are well-lit, pro-beach courts. You can join in just for fun, but there are also hard-fought league games you can watch. ☎ (340) 775-1800, ext. 2540.

Spa Services



After a day of sun and active sports, cool down with a massage, seaweed body wrap or facial. The day spas below offer a wide variety of services. Zen Retreat and The Look Spa accept walk-ins, but making an appointment assures you of service.

Zen Retreat Day Spa & Yoga Studio, Tillett Gardens. Eastern-influenced services, yoga and tai chi classes. Mon-Sat, 8 am-7 pm, ☎ (340) 774-8044.

The Look Spa, Marina Building, Frenchtown. Services for men and women, including manicures and pedicures. Mon-Fri, 10 am-7 pm, ☎ (340) 776-8672.

Journeys Spa, Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort. A full-service spa with access to the hotel's fitness center and exercise classes such as pilates and water aerobics. Mon-Thurs, 6:30 am-9:30 pm, Fri-Sun, 8 am-8 pm. ☎ (340) 777-7100.

Paradise Day Spa, Nisky Center, Charlotte Amalie. Specialties include glycolic collagen deep cleansing and men's facials. Mon-Sat, 9 am-5 pm. ☎ (340) 714-3488.

The Reef Health Club & Spa, Marriott Frenchman's Reef. Specialties include stone and aromatherapy massages, reflexology and facials. A fitness room, sauna and eucalyptus steam room are available too. 9 am-8 pm daily. Fitness room, 6:30 am-10 pm. ☎ (340) 776-8500 ext. 6802.



Sightseeing

Historic Sites in Charlotte Amalie

The town is still bound to the sea. The harbor and waterfront are its heart. Instead of the pirate ships and gold-laden galleons of the past, the harbor is crowded with sleek cruise ships, sailboats gliding by or riding at anchor, catamarans and local fishermen hawking their wares on the dock.



Pick up a **map of Charlotte Amalie** at the Tourist Welcome Center on Tolbod Gade.

Fort Christian Museum

A good place to start is the red tower that dominates the east end of town on the waterfront. This is Fort Christian (look for the entrance in the parking lot).

Painted a deep red and marked by a distinctive clock tower, this is the oldest continuously occupied building in St. Thomas. It was home to the governor, carpenters, blacksmiths, a cotton gin, the minister and, until 1983, the island's jail. All legal, social and ceremonial functions took place here. The old cells where planters served 30 days for non-payment of taxes are now filled with galleries, shops and the Fort Christian Museum.

The museum is small, but contains memorabilia from St. Thomas' earliest days to the present and offers a complete history lesson free of charge. You will see photos and paintings of the town when it was still known as Tap Haus. Period furniture, bed stands, a desk and a kneeling bench for prayers are on display. Interesting too are the newspapers and old photos of Transfer Day, March 31, 1917, when the US took over the administration of the islands. An Act of Congress in 1927 made Virgin Islanders United States citizens.

Emancipation Park – The Grand Galleria

The fire house near the fort faces Emancipation Park, which is small and marked by a bandstand. It was here that Governor Peter Von Scholten freed the slaves of the Virgin Islands after a revolt on St. Croix. It was July 3, 1848. He was recalled to Denmark in disgrace. A motion to rename the park in the Governor's honor was defeated in the Virgin Island Legislature. Look for a replica of the Liberty Bell and a bust of King Christian amid the benches and stately old trees. **Vendors Plaza** is adjacent to the park. The stunning white building that frames the park's northern border is **The Grand Galleria**. Built in 1841 as the Grand Hotel, it is an excellent example of 19th-century Greek Revival architecture. The hotel fell into disrepair but was renovated and is now home to art galleries, boutiques and restaurants.

Norre Gade's Sites

Norre Gade (North Street, actually the continuation of Main Street) is the block that the Grand Galleria opens onto. If you stroll along Norre Gade, you'll soon come to stately **Frederick Lutheran Church**, founded in 1666, the same year the Danish West Indies company received the charter to settle St. Thomas.

Actually, the earliest services were held in Fort Christian and this church wasn't built until 1793. Gutted by fire and hurricanes, it was restored in 1973 and now looks exactly as it did two centuries ago. A schedule of services is posted outside. Adjacent to the church building is the Danish manor-style **Bethania Hall**, built as a private home in 1800. It served as home for the aged, a school and a post office before becoming the **Parish Hall**.

Beyond the church you'll see **Roosevelt Park**, with a small children's playground and lovely plants and trees. Upon closer inspection, you'll notice name tags on many of them, put there by The Conservation Department.

Seven Arches Museum

A block from the park (left) you'll be on Kongen's Gade (King Street). Here you'll find the Seven Arches Museum, the restored 19th-century home of a Danish artisan. The museum commemorates Caribbean life in that era. It is named for the seven arches that support its "Welcoming Arms" staircase. They are yellow ballast brick, as is the staircase that leads up to the main floor, which has been restored using authentic antiques of the period.

The kitchen is particularly interesting and you can see the cistern that collects rainwater. Most of St. Thomas still has cisterns. The view of the harbor is lovely and rum drinks are served in the flower-filled garden where you'll see a quaint West Indian cottage. Small admission charge.



Locals rarely use the street name "Kongen's Gade." They refer to this area as **Government Hill**.

Government House – Hotel 1829

Government House is a white brick and wood building with a red roof and intricate ironwork. It commands a magnificent view of the town and harbor. Erected in 1867 as a meeting place for the Danish Colonial Council, it was renovated in 1994 and now houses both the home and the offices of the governor.

You can visit the public reception rooms on the first two floors. The large painting in the center of the staircase is of Transfer Day. Another depicts Salt River, St. Croix, where the slave uprising took place. The 2nd-floor ballroom has elegant mirrors, highly polished floors and walls and two small paintings by Camille Pissarro, the leading French Impressionist, who was born here in 1830. Another interesting feature (main floor) is three large wooden plaques inscribed with the names of the Danish governors from 1692-1917,

American-appointed governors 1917-1971 and those elected since 1971.

Nearby **Hotel 1829** is both an operating hotel and National Historic Site. Designed in Spanish style, it was built as a townhouse for a French sea captain. Look for his initials in the wrought-iron grillwork on the balcony above the main entrance.

99 Steps – Haagensen House

The island's famed steps are alongside the Hotel 1829. These brick steps (actually, I counted 101) are part of an old street. The bricks were used as ships ballast, with the yellow ones coming from Denmark and the red ones from England, France and Spain. There are steps on many hillsides here because the Danish engineers who planned the town laid out the grid pattern unaware of St. Thomas' hilly terrain. As you climb the steps, you'll see Haagensen House, which was built in the 18th century as a Danish home, then served as the official residence of the colonial governors. It contains crystal chandeliers, a hand-carved four-poster bed and other lovely furnishings. The house has been renovated and is open to the public.

Blackbeard's Castle

Atop the 99 Steps stands a 252-foot tower built in 1680 as part of the town's fortification. It is now the centerpiece of a boutique hotel. Recently designated a National Historic Landmark, its name refers to the pirate Edward Teach who is said to have spent much time on St. Thomas.

The view from the tower, which dominates Government Hill, spans the town, harbor and out to Frenchman's Reef. The stunning white Greek Revival structure to the right, topped by the red and white flag, is the Danish consulate. The hill it sits on is called Denmark Hill.

The Historic Synagogue – Weibel Museum

The St. Thomas Synagogue (B'racha V'shalom Ug'milut Chasadim is the official name) is one of the best-preserved buildings here. It was founded in 1796 and is the second-oldest synagogue in the Caribbean (Curacao's is older). Open to the public Mon-Fri, 9:30 am-4:30 pm, this synagogue has a sand floor following Sephardic tradition, as a reminder of the Jews' exodus from Egypt. Since some of the earliest Danish settlers were Jewish, the synagogue played an important role in the colony. Fire destroyed the first synagogue and a second was torn down so the building could be enlarged. Today's building in Danish colonial style was completed in 1833. Adjacent to the synagogue, the Weibel Museum has exhibits that depict the history of the Jewish community on the island. Special events are held here as well. ☎ (340) 774-4312 for information about services that are open to the public.



The **Synagogue and Museum** are located on Crystal Gade (two blocks north of Main Street) at Raadets Gade.

Market Square & Savan

Market Square (De Market) at Main Street and Savan Gade, once the slave auction center, is now a vegetable and handicraft center. Check out the unusual wrought-iron roof. It is a copy of a European railroad station. Savan Gade is the street leading north from the market. The area here, called Savan, was laid out in the 1700's as a residential neighborhood for middle-class black shopkeepers and artisans. You can still see the narrow streets and small houses, now occupied by St. Thomas' Rastafarian community. Shops in this area are owned by and cater to the tastes of Rastafarians.

Guided Walks

If you enjoyed this walk and would like to hear more about the island's history, join one of the walking tours organized by **St. Thomas Historic Trust**. Led by knowledgeable guides, the walks leave from Trust headquarters at Haagensen House near the 99 Steps. Walks last one hour and the $18 fee helps defray the cost of maintaining Trust properties. Daily walks weekday in-season and several days a week off-season. ☎ (340) 774-5541 for schedules.

Blackbeard's Castle and Hotel 1829 sponsor a narrated taxi/walking tour led by knowledgeable guides. The group meets at Blackbeard's Castle. ☎ (340) 776-1234 or (340) 776-1829 for more information.

Island-Wide Sightseeing

Coral World

Coki Point (East End), open daily 9 am-5 pm, ☎ (340) 775-1555, www.coralworldvi.com. If Morris Kahn, an Israeli businessman, had not punctured an eardrum while scuba diving, Coral World would never have been built. And that would be a real loss for non-divers like me, who would never get to see the dazzling coral reefs and the curious marine animals and plants that inhabit the Caribbean Sea.



Unable to dive again, Kahn realized that most people never have an opportunity to see the rich ocean life and he set out to change that. Working with a marine biologist, he came up with the novel idea of an underwater observation tower, which would not destroy but rather enhance the natural environment and allow people a glimpse of the underwater world. Their first tower was built in Eilat, Israel. Because of its tremendous success, Kahn decided to expand his concept. He chose Coki Point on the northeast shore of St. Thomas. Coki Beach was long reputed to have the best snorkeling on the island. The observation

tower was constructed on land, floated to its present location and anchored 100 feet offshore.

The Coral World complex, on a four-acre peninsula, looks rather like a picturesque village, but the four geodesic domes immediately alert you that this is no ordinary fishing town. Save the shops near the entrance for later and head directly to the three-tiered undersea observatory connected by bridge to the mainland. The top is an observation deck. It is above water level and, because of its circular shape, the picture windows face Coki Point, tiny offshore cays, St. John and the British Virgin Islands.

Head down the central circular staircase to the mid-level Deep Reef Tank, a 50,000-gallon circular viewing area that is home to larger animals usually found far from shore. They live in a donut-shaped tank (you are in the hole). Fresh, unfiltered sea water is pumped into the tank, with the excess spilling back into the sea. Observe sharks, barracudas, sting rays, lobsters, eels, sea turtles and smaller fish as they co-exist. Feeding time is 11:45 am daily.

The Undersea Observatory, the bottom level, is entirely below water level and surrounded by open ocean. I felt like Capt. Nemo from Jules Verne's famous novel as I stood on the ocean floor and gazed at the silent world all around me. No net keeps the creatures here, so the picture is constantly changing. Needle fish, tarpons, moray eels, blue parrotfish, dog snappers and even an occasional octopus dart by. The coral reef is stunning and as beautiful as any flower garden. Some of the coral has been brought here from nearby waters and placed at the same depth and current as their natural environments. Thus, there is a greater variety of species here than would normally be found in any one location. Sea sponges and deep-sea flowers complete the scene. Illustrations and descriptions identify the most common species for you.

Caribbean Reef Encounter

Located near the entrance by the lily pool and tropical nature trail, the Reef Encounter is an 80,000-gallon tank that is exposed to sun, air and rain, recreating the natural environment of a coral reef. The circular viewing area has eight-foot-high glass walls so viewers are surrounded by hundreds of reef fish and other reef creatures swimming among living coral and sponges. Feeding here is at 9:45 am and 1:45 pm.

Marine Gardens Aquarium



The twin domes to the rear of the complex are the Marine Gardens, which are similar to mainland aquariums except that the 21 tanks focus on local species. Each seascape represents a typical coral reef and its denizens, with their personalities and symbiotic relationships. You'll see purple anemones, spiny sea urchins, strange pipefish, colorful sponges and coral crabs. The most interesting exhibit is the glowing fluorescent corals, shown under ultra-violet light.

Although the sights above are the most dramatic in the Coral World complex, there are many other spots you'll find interesting. Among them: The turtle pool, iguana alley, shark shallows and touch pool where you can handle starfish and sea cucumbers.

The Coral World Dive Shop is the place to stop if you want to try Sea Trekkin' (see *Active Water Sports*). There are gift shops and several restaurants on the grounds.

Entrance fees are $18 adults, $9 for children under 12. Sea Trekkin': $68 adults, $59 for children, includes entrance fees to Coral World.

Coral World has installed a wheelchair lift at the entrance to the Caribbean Reef Encounter. The entire complex has wide walkways, ramps, interactive exhibits and interpretive signs, all designed to allow those with impairments to visit the area comfortably.

The Most Scenic Sights

The mountain range forming the island's spine provides spectacular views of the surrounding water, islands and Magens Bay. Drake's Seat, Mountain Top, Fairchild Park and St. Peter Great House and Botanical Gardens are among the most scenic spots. Bus tours stop at them and you can easily drive from one to the other. A fifth site, Paradise Point, is reached by cable car.

Drake's Seat

High above the city, this is the spot from which the pirate-admiral chose to watch in 1593 as his fleet set sail for its ill-fated attack on the Spanish stronghold of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

From Drake's stone bench, you get a clear view of heart-shaped Magens Bay and the tiny islands and cays that sit in Drake's Passage, a thin stretch of water between Tortola and St. John. An enterprising St. Thomian businessman is always at the seat, with his docile donkey attired in a spiffy straw hat. Allow him to photograph you astride his donkey. It makes a great souvenir at just a small fee.



Drake's Seat is on Route 40, also known as Skyline Drive.

Mountain Top

West of Drake's Seat, along Route 40, is St. Thomas' highest point. At 1,547 feet, Mountain Top is the place to sample a banana daiquiri while you gaze out at the British Virgin Islands, St. John and Magens Bay. There are telescopic viewers, several shops, a tropical aviary and a restaurant. You'll notice cooler air here.



Take Rte 40 north from Charlotte Amalie.

St. Peter Great House & Gardens

Roads signs on Route 40 will lead you to St. Peter Great House and Gardens, which is on a small road called St. Peter Mountain Road. The house was built with volcanic rock in the 1800s. It was leveled by Hurricane Hugo in 1989, then was rebuilt using the same "Blue Bitch" volcanic rock. It is stunning. Set on 11 acres of landscaped gardens, 1,000 feet above Hull Bay, the Great House was part of a 150-acre plantation. The French owners claimed that pirates used the land to bury treasure, but none was ever found. Later owners were the French Consul and the Governor of the USVI. The wrap-around verandah looks down over lush foliage and at least 20 islands, most of them British. The smaller plantation houses have been renovated and are filled by art galleries and craft workshops. There are self-guided nature trails that lead through the gardens, where more than 200 varieties of trees and plants are identified. Don't miss the orchid jungle and the unusual umbrella plant from Madagascar. There is an $8 admission fee. Hours: Mon-Sat, 9 am-4:30 pm, ☎ (340) 774-4999.



St. Peter Great House has become a popular venue for weddings. They have in-house wedding planners.

Fairchild Park

Much closer to town, Route 40 appears to enter a lush tropical rain forest with hibiscus, frangipani and orchids. Tiny (56 acres) Fairchild Park is set in this area. This park was willed to St. Thomas by a long-time resident in 1951. It has stone paths and two small benches for a peaceful and aromatic respite in the midst of bustling St. Thomas. It offers an almost 360-degree view of the island with the harbor on one side and Magens Bay on the other. It's a lovely spot for a picnic lunch.

Paradise Point

The cable car up to Paradise Point leaves from a terminal across the road from Havensight Mall. The gondola rises slowly, seemingly effortless as it glides above the harbor and town. The final stop is 700 feet above the harbor. The trip takes seven minutes.

The views from the observation deck include the harbor, with its sailboats, cruise ships and seaplanes. There are shops, a restaurant and a bar. You can also drive to Paradise Point. The road is just beyond the cable car building. There is a marked hiking trail (about a quarter-mile) that faces south for views of St. Croix 40 miles away. Wear sturdy shoes. It's steep and rocky. Don't forget your camera. Open 9 am-5 pm daily. ☎ (340) 774-9809.

Exploring Nearby "Virgins"



Three islands lie in Charlotte Amalie's harbor. Virtually uninhabited and therefore pristine, they afford visitors lovely beaches, bicycle and hiking trails and unusual flora and fauna. Head to **Tickles Dockside Pub** at Crown Bay Marina – the Water Island ferry leaves from their dock. There's no service to the others, but locals at the dock will take you to them. Arrange the fee in advance. You can rent a small powerboat and go on your own.

Water Island

Water Island, the fourth-largest Virgin, lies a quarter-mile off St. Thomas' southern coast. Its 500 acres were once part of a St. Thomas peninsula, but a channel was cut to allow US submarines to reach their base just west of downtown. The Sub-base was a key defensive position during the Second World War and it remained under the control of the US Army until 1952. In 1996, the US Dept. of the Interior transferred control to the VI territorial government. Efforts to develop the two-mile-long island have been largely

unsuccessful, so today you'll find lots of interesting ruins of WWII-era forts and sugar plantations. Also here is the hurricane-ravaged remains of The Water Isle Hotel, destroyed in 1989. Some say it was the model for Herman Wouk's *Don't Stop The Carnival.*

Most visitors head to Honeymoon Beach to swim, snorkel and sunbathe. Palm-shaded, it has a beach bar and snack shop. It's a five-minute walk from the ferry dock. If you enjoy bicycling, you can join a Water Island bike tour (see *Bicycling*). The ferry (10 minutes) leaves from Crown Bay Marina several times daily. Check the schedule at Tickles Dockside Pub. ☎ (340) 776-8500.

Hassel Island

Hassel Island, even closer to shore, is part of the Virgin Island National Park, most of which is on St. John. Not blessed with great beaches, Hassel's 135 acres are best for leisurely hikes and exploring the remnants of an 1800's Marine Railway and military garrison. Bring food and water if you intend to stay for more than an hour or two. There are bathrooms but no other facilities.

Buck Island

Buck Island, two miles south of St. Thomas, is not as well known as Buck Island National Monument near St. Croix, which is that island's primary tourist stop. This 45-acre wildlife preserve, managed by the US fish and wildlife service, is a popular stop for day-sail operators and scuba ships. The wreck of the freighter *Cartanser Sr.* is nearby and there is a colorful reef. The island itself is covered with cacti-dotted scrublands, flower-filled forests and palm trees along its coast. They are home to red-billed tropic birds, frigates and terns. No visitors are allowed on the island at this writing. There is no ferry service, but you can rent a small power boat and cruise around it.

Organized Tours

On Land

St. Thomas Sightseeing Tours offers island tours with a professional guide on an open-sided Surrey bus. ☎ (340) 714-4905.

Serenity Tours organizes bus tours of the island using larger conventional buses. ☎ (340) 777-1255.

By Land & Sea Tours offers a unique package that starts with a scenic island drive with lots of photo ops and follows with a sailing adventure aboard a 76-foot catamaran. Snorkel gear and transportation to and from your hotel are included. Reservations are required. ☎ (340) 775-9500.

By Sea

The **Kon Tiki Party Raft** offers a three-hour tour of the harbor that passes near Hassel and Water Islands. There are large glass-bottomed viewers so you can see a variety of corals, sponges and tropical fish. Unlimited tropical drinks, limbo shows and steel bands keep the party going. A stop at Honeymoon Beach on Water Island for swimming, sunbathing and beachcombing for shells is fun too. Daily departures. ☎ (340) 775-5055, www.cruiseshipexcursions.net.

From the Air

Helicopter touring has become popular over spots from Niagara Falls to the Grand Canyon. So too here. **Blue Water Aviation** offers helicopter tours over St. Thomas and nearby islands. ☎ (340) 776-5631, www.island-helicopters.com.

Shop Till You Drop



While most visitors to St. Thomas are attracted by the crystal-clear waters and stunning beaches, others are lured by the best duty-free shopping in the Caribbean. St.

Thomas has been a premier shopping mecca for as long as anyone can remember. Three hundred years ago, Charlotte Amalie was a Danish town filled with red-roofed warehouses that stored molasses, rum and spices. The shops you see on Main Street were, for the most part, the shop-ends of those warehouses. Alleys and passageways were cut to provide access to the waterfront where goods were unloaded from ships anchored offshore or docked at Hassel Island.

Today's retail shops still line Main Street, while others can be found along the widened Waterfront Drive. Alleys and passageways still connect the two, but they are now charming cobblestoned mini-malls, which are closed to traffic.

The sheer number of shops and the diversity of the merchandise sold can seem overwhelming. But if you take some time to organize your shopping forays (and ignore the hawkers) you'll have fun and you'll bring home some real bargains.

A Shopping Orientation



Dronningen's Gade (Main Street) is Charlotte Amalie's major shopping street. The 13-block strip between Emancipation Park (on the east) and Savan Gade at Market Square (on the west) has as many shops as New York's Madison Avenue. **Waterfront Drive**, widened on land reclaimed from the sea, also has shops.

King Christian Walk, **A.H. Riise Walk**, **Hibiscus Alley**, **Drake's Passage**, **Royal Dane Mall** and **Palm Passage** are a few of the alleys and passageways that connect the two. Closed to traffic and crammed with boutiques and small eateries, they are fun to explore.

Vendors Plaza, adjacent to Fort Christiansted, is an open-air shopping area filled with tarp-covered tables where local artisans sell their wares. Other items are imported from nearby islands.

Havensight Mall and **Port of Sale**, just east of downtown, are adjacent to the West Indies Dock (cruise ships). These have expanded greatly in recent years and there are now over 100 shops – many of them branches of downtown shops, but a few that are unique. Clustered in block-long, one-story buildings, their location is identified by building numbers rather than addresses. Buildings 1-7 are at Havensight and number 8 is Port of Sale. There is a nice mix of shops, restaurants, banks and local businesses. Pick up a site map at the information kiosk. The area is so bustling that other shops and fast-food eateries have opened across the road near the Paradise Point Tramway and Al Cohen's Plaza. A big plus here is the ample parking.



You can walk from downtown to Havensight (daylight only), but it's quite a hike if you have packages, so you can hop the **shuttle bus** that operates from 9 am-5 pm.

American Yacht Harbor and **Red Hook Plaza** near the Red Hook Ferry Dock have a few shops you might want to explore and there are others at **Mountain Top** and **Paradise Point**. The **Ritz Carlton** and **Marriott Frenchman's Reef** are two of the resort hotels that have shopping arcades.

Why Shop Here?

Although the Virgin Islands are part of the United States, prices are lower here than on the mainland. Why? Thank the Danes! In 1764, King Frederick V declared St. Thomas a free port and, when the Danes sold the island to the United States in 1917, they insisted that the free port status continue. Therefore, the maximum duty on goods imported into the Virgin Islands is 6%, far less than the tax paid elsewhere. Merchants here can sell for much less than their fellow retailers on the mainland and still make a profit. Further savings are realized because there is no sales tax in

the Virgin Islands. Because over one million tourists visit St. Thomas annually, merchandise moves quickly so you are always assured of getting the latest model and most up-to-date fashions available.



As noted previously, the duty-free allowance is $1,200 and there is no US duty on locally made articles.

Shopping Tips

- Regular shopping hours are 9 am-5 pm Mon through Sat. Some shops open on Sun if there are cruise ships in port. Hotel shops stay open till 9 pm.
- Credit cards are alive and well in St. Thomas. All larger stores accept the major cards. Have cash on hand for souvenirs and smaller purchases. There are ATMs.
- Stick to the major shops. They have been in business here for years; their reputations are your best guarantee.
- St. John has a limited number of shops. Christiansted (St. Croix) has a delightful shopping center though all but a few stores are branches of those on St. Thomas. St. Thomas is the place for serial shoppers.
- Many of the shops at Port of Sale Mall are outlet stores selling heavily discounted items that are last year's style, odd sizes or off-beat colors.

What To Buy?

Considerable savings can be had on fine writing instruments, exclusive leathers and luggage, electronics, cameras, and designer casual wear and swimsuits. Crystal, silver service, figurines and fine china are often among the best buys. Fine gold jewelry, pieces set with precious gems and a vast

selection of the world's most desired watches are the items purchased most often. Liquors are also popular purchases.

The amount you save will vary from 15% to as much as 50% on some items. However, certain buys are better than others at a specific time. If you are planning to purchase an expensive camera or a particular watch, you should comparison-shop that item before leaving home. Then you can decide if the savings involved make it a worthwhile purchase. St. Thomas caters to the tastes and pocket books of the rich, as well as those of the budget-conscious visitor.

The Best Shops

To list every shop in the downtown commercial center and Havensight could fill an entire book and would not be helpful to you. You will be inundated with free literature listing shops that care enough to advertise – and they all do. We have attempted to ferret out those shops that are the cream of the crop. They have earned their first-rate reputations over many years of operation on the island. They carry the most sought-after brands, select jewelry and unusual merchandise, and they sell them at one price. No bargaining! Some places will give you a discount if you buy in quantity. Unfortunately, many of the independent, innovative shops so prevalent here a few years ago have closed to be replaced by branch shops of large retailers – much as in stateside malls. Stores selling inexpensive jewelry have become ubiquitous, but you can still find top-end jewelry, crystal and watches if you follow the recommendations here. We have organized most of them by type of merchandise.

Shopping at Vendors Plaza

If you're looking for a small gift for your Aunt Sadie or the neighbor that's been watering your plants and you'd like something typically Caribbean, head to Vendors Plaza near Fort Christiansted. Every morning (except Sunday) rain or shine, vendors set up tables, build tarp tents over them and

lay out a colorful assortment of locally-made and imported items. "Imported" in this case means from islands nearby such as Haiti, Dominican Republic and Dominica. You'll find beach wear, including pareos, jewelry, silk-screened t-shirts, wood carvings, handwoven baskets and knitted beach bags.

Jewelry, made to order on-site, uses local conch shells, larimar (a gemstone found in the Dominican Republic), jade and red coral. Several tables feature Caribbean Hook Bracelets. The hook is symbolic of the fishermen who have fed Virgin Islanders for years. Each island has a unique style. Children's beach wear is colorful and useful. When you take a break, you can have your hair braided at one of the tables.

Vendors Plaza is a small version of a Middle Eastern souk. It's noisy and fun. You can bargain here.

A.H. Riise, Main Street. St. Thomas' answer to Bloomingdales. A.H. Riise has been an island tradition since 1838. It has kept on growing and it keeps improving with age. The A.H. Riise Gift Shops fill an entire Main Street block and an alley or two as well. Housed in a beautifully restored pirate warehouse are scores of tasteful boutiques selling first-quality merchandise of all kinds. What makes A.H. Riise so interesting is that the boutiques keep changing. On one visit the mezzanine had Oriental rugs and on another it was selling furs. You never are sure what you'll find. Riise could easily fit into virtually every merchandise category listed, so we'll list just a few selections to whet your appetite.

There are four large areas within the store – **Jewelry and Watches**, **Perfumes**, **Cosmetics and Skin Care Products**, a **Crystal Shoppe** and the **Liquor and Tobacco** departments – and individual boutiques within each area. The "Jewels" boutique sells such fine watches as Rolex, Patek Philippe and Chopard. There is a Breitling boutique and a David Yurman boutique as well. Gold jewelry set with diamonds, colorful gemstones and pearls are featured at many counters. The Crystal Shoppe offers Hummel figures, Waterford Crystal, Iladro and fine china. Curved brick archways lead to the perfume center, the liquor and fine cigar

store and the "Caribbean Print Gallery" that sells historical prints, posters, maps and cards depicting aspects of West Indian life. You can't and you shouldn't miss A.H. Riise.

A dozen shops line the A.H. Riise Alley that runs from Main Street to the Waterfront. Some are part of A.H. Riise and others are independently owned. They'll be listed elsewhere. Also at Havensight.

Little Switzerland, Tolbod Gade-Main Street, the Caribbean's best-known retailer, has shops on virtually every island and 50 years of impeccable service to offer. They have two shops in the downtown shopping area. The **Tolbod Gade shop** is the more traditional with a broad selection of fine china and crystal. Baccarat, Christofle, Waterford, Rosenthal and Swarovski are but a few of the premium names for sale here. Also here are the collectable figurines by Hummel and Lladro. They have expanded their selection of watches to include Cartier, Breitling, Baume-Mercier and Raymond Weil among others. Fine jewelry, much of it imported from Italy, is also sold here.

The **Main Street shop** breaks with tradition by adding Coach, Tiffany and Lalique to the Little Switzerland merchandise. Leathers, unusual jewelry and gifts make this store an enjoyable shopping experience. An attractive selection of world globes on 24K gold plated or antique silver stands mark the store front. Also at Havensight.

Grand Galleria, Tolbod Gade, at the head of Main Street, is a natural starting point or last stop on your shopping foray. A lovely building that was formerly the upscale Grand Hotel, it now has a half-dozen shops around an inner courtyard. You can browse from one to the other and the merchandise is all high-end.

The **Gallery St. Thomas** represents many of the island's best known artists. There are original works in a variety of mediums, but what stands out are the colorful wall hangings, prints and photographs of the Caribbean and Haitian art. The same owners have a map and print shop in A.H. Riise.

Belle Femme Boutique specializes in designer shoes, handbags and resortwear. You'll find Kate Spade, Prada, Michael Kors and Adrienne Vittadini.

Tanzanite International sells jewelry, virtually all of which is set with colorful tanzanite stones. They are moderately priced.

Del Sol sells island T-shirts and souvenirs. **Diamonds International** has several outlets here. They have over 2,000 diamonds on display, including some in yellow, pink and orange hues. Select a stone, then a setting and a piece will be designed for you.

Whether you make Grand Galleria your first or last stop, you'll appreciate a cup of bush tea from **Lillian's** or a California roll from **Beni Iguana**. Sit at one of the umbrella-covered tables in the courtyard.

Fine Jewelry & Watches

H. Stern Jewellers, Main Street. This Brazil-based internationally renowned jeweler has two shops facing each other on Main Street. Newly redesigned "The Design Center" (on the northside) offers unique pieces and designs both classic and avant-garde. Many are set with the colorful Brazilian gemstones for which H. Stern is famous. Tourmalines, amethysts and topaz stones are set in 14k and 18k gold. Across the street, "The Outlet" displays individual pieces sent from the 150 Stern shops worldwide. They are sold here at tremendous savings but offer the same craftsmanship and international guarantees as the Design Center pieces. Also at Havensight.

David Yurman Boutique, Main Street (A.H. Riise). David Yurman's distinctive watches and jewelry are in a small boutique at A.H. Riise. The mix of sterling silver and 18k gold with and without precious and semi-precious stones have become a favorite of well-dressed women everywhere.

Jewels, A.H. Riise & Waterfront. Head to Jewels if you are interested in a designer watch. Breitling, Omega, Jaeger Le

Coultre and a score of others are sold here, as are pieces of jewelry set with diamonds and emeralds. Also at Havensight.

Bernard K. Passman Jewelry, Main Street. Passman makes unique pieces of jewelry fashioned from black coral, which is found at a depth of 200 feet near the Cayman Islands. Highly polished and set in gold, the jewelry is striking. Also at Havensight.

Cartier, Main Street, sells its own distinctive jewelry and watches.

Pierres, Palm Passage, creates custom jewelry handcrafted in the store by goldsmith Gerald Rathkolb. He uses top-quality gemstones and has a very large collection of loose stones to choose from.

Amsterdam Sauer, Main Street. Proving that there's more than coffee in Brazil, this is another Brazil-based jeweler who specializes in 18k gold jewelry set with colorful gemstones. Designed to fit the stone, pieces range from elegant to sporty. Also at The Ritz Carlton.

Sibella Silver, Palm Passage & Royal Dane Mall. For a change of pace head to these locally owned shops that offer individually designed jewelry in sterling silver. Designed and fashioned in the store's workshop by a father and daughter team, the pieces are set with garnet, pink tourmalines and smoky quartz. Also unusual leather goods.

Cardow, Main Street. Cardow's two shops sit at the head of Main Street. They boast the world's largest selection of jewelry and they deliver. It can seem overwhelming at first and quality varies, so ask a lot of questions. The jewelry store's **Treasure Cove** sells all items priced under $299 and specializes in gold chains. The **Diamond Store** sells items set with diamonds and tanzanite. Also at Havensight and Marriott Frenchman's Reef.

Cameras, Electronics & Audio Equipment

Royal Caribbean, Main Street. Although it has diversified a bit, Royal Caribbean, with two Main Street shops, is still the largest camera merchant on St. Thomas. You can save on such famous brands as Nikon, Canon, Leica and Minolta. They also sell binoculars. Royal Caribbean now also sells Mont Blanc pens, Dunhill lighters, Mikimoto pearls, designer sunglasses and Judith Lieber handbags. Also at Havensight.

Boolchand's, Main Street, one of the oldest establishments here, offers the finest cameras, electronic and digital equipment and audio products. They are the exclusive home for Hasselblad, Zeiss and Bose. They too have diversified and now sell jewelry and watches. Also at Havensight.

Fashion & Resort Wear

Palm Passage, a wide tropical courtyard that runs from Main Street to the Waterfront, is home to the island's most upscale boutiques. Some designers have individual shops, among them **Nicole Miller**, **Polo Ralph Lauren** and **Cartier**. Others are sold in locally owned shops. **Tutto Moda** sells Hugo Boss and other designer apparel for men. Its neighbor, **Portico**, sells Versace, Valentino, Dolce-Gabbana and Zegna. **Meson Amalie** has sportswear for men and women. **Quiet Storm** offers a large selection of Lilly Pulitzer, Tommy Bahama and Eliza B. Ribbon belts and sandals.



Stop for lunch or a cool drink at **Pita Express** in the passage. It has a full bar.

Longchamp Boutique, Main Street. The signature Longchamp nylon bags are both practical and stylish. They come in a dozen colors and a variety of sizes. The boutique also sells trendy leather handbags and luggage. Fashion accessories such as silk scarves are also lovely.

Coach Boutique, Little Switzerland, Main Street. Fine leather handbags, belts and briefcases for women and wallets and travel bags for men.

Fresh Produce, Riise's Alley. Casually classic resortwear in exhilarating colors are the lure here. They have a "Splash" swimwear collection, footwear and accessories. Clothes for kids and infants too.

Cuckoo's Nest, International Plaza. Resortwear and sportswear for women most of which is imported from the US.

Larianna Boutique, Royal Dane Mall. Trendy clothing from up and coming designers. Styles range from grungy tees and jeans to silk cocktail wear.

Local Color, Royal Dane Mall. Brand-name resortwear such as Jams World and Urban Safari are featured here. Unique are the T-Shirts, sweaters and dresses with colorful island designs that are handpainted by St. John artist Sloop Jones. Straw hats and beach bags.

Davante, A.H. Riise Mall. Such popular brands as Chanel, Versace and Prada. Sunglasses at great prices.

Keep Left, American Yacht Harbor. Clothing and gear for those who enjoy active lifestyles. NAOT sandals, Patagonia dresses, Quiksilver swimwear and T-shirts in cool colors. Backpacks, hats, sunglasses plus tropical condiments, spices and note cards.

Players, Havensight Bldg III. Look for Reef and Teva leather sandals, Oakley and Maui Jim sunglasses and swimwear from Roxy, Rusty and Billabong.

Caribbean Surf Co, Royal Dane Mall. Similar to the two stores above, this is a fun shop to browse in. Great surfing scenes are shown on flatscreens throughout the store, which sells surfboards, kiteboards and Naish Kites, as well as eyewear and footwear.

Touba Homeland, International Plaza. Clothing, art, gifts and music from Africa and many Rastafarian items as well.

Linen

Hand-embroidered cotton blends, linen and silk tablecloths from Hong Kong, China and Taiwan are reasonably priced on St. Thomas. Cloths, in all sizes and shapes, luncheon sets, napkins and sheets and pillowcases in pastel shades are the most popular.

Mr. Tablecloth (Main Street) and **Omni Linens** (Raadet's Gade) have the largest selections. Ask about items made with micro-fiber, which is stain-resistant and does not need ironing.

Crystal, China & Gifts for the Home

The Crystal Shoppe, Main Street & A.H. Riise, has a boutique in A.H. Riise but has two independent shops on Main Street as well. The A.H. Riise shop features Lladro, Swarovski, and Waterford crystal. They have a bridal registry. The Main Street shops carry them as well, but they also stock Hummel, Herend, Rosenthal and Daum lines. The three shops are within a block of one another so it is easy to browse.

Scandinavian Center, Havensight Bldg III. Although the store sells jewelry, the items to look for here are those that have been imported from the three Scandinavian countries. Royal Copenhagen, Georg Jensen sterling silver flatware, jewelry and serving pieces; Orrefors and Bing-Grondahl are among the most popular names. The new West Indian art gallery has Diane Artware ceramics as well as jewelry.

Laska Glass Art, Royal Dane Mall. Not crystal here but instead one-of-a-kind blown-glass pieces that are stunning to look at and would look wonderful in your home or as a gift. Handblown glass vases, sparkling Murano glass martini and wine glasses, glass butterflies and hand-beaded jewelry and pendants are among the items displayed. The owners teach a beading class at the Ritz Carlton Hotel one night a week. If you are interested phone ☎ (340) 715-3042.

Pangborn Design Collection, Palm Passage, a beautiful shop to browse in, features an eclectic collection of gifts and table and bar accessories from Italy and authentic Japanese tableware and sushi sets. You'll also find designer pens and leather accessories.

Perfumes, Cosmetics & Skin Care Products

Perfumes at A.H. Riise, Main Street. This center has expanded so much recently that it is now the largest perfumery on St. Thomas. It is the island's exclusive outlet for MAC and Origins. Clarins, Clinique, Elizabeth Arden, La Prairie and Shiseido are just a few of those sold here.

Tropicana, Main Street, sells perfumes, cosmetics and skin care products exclusively. They have hundreds of fragrances – American and imported. You'll recognize Sonia Rykiel, Oscar de la Renta and Givenchy. Exclusives here include Sisley and Borghese.

Antiques & Antique Jewelry

Carson & Co. Antiques, Royal Dane Mall. Why look for antiques here and have to worry about getting them back home? Because there are always such interesting finds in this small shop, crammed with pieces from medieval, Renaissance and Colonial times. Oriental pieces are also well represented. Sculptures, prints, paintings, bowls, vases and a score of other things, even jewelry. Your purchase can always be mailed home for you. Carson & Co. has a year-round Christmas ornament display.

SOS Antiques, Waterfront. Shipwreckers Ocean Salvage specializes in nautical antiques, authentic cannon, swords and flintlocks. They have a large collection of nautical maps and maps of the islands. On-site craftsmen fashion nautical jewelry using authentic shipwreck and ancient coins. They are very attractive.

Pirate's Chest, Paradise Point. Although primarily a souvenir shop, Pirate's Chest does have a good collection of au-

thentic treasure coin jewelry and loose coins for the collector. They come from shipwrecks and from the Danish West Indian colonies. They also sell Cruzan hook bracelets and larimar jewelry.

Island Gifts & Souvenirs

Down Island Traders, Waterfront. Drop in at Down Island Traders, an attractive store selling spices, teas, coffee beans and jellies (of guava, lime, sea grape and mango), all packaged for gift giving. If you enjoy cooking, invest in a West Indian cookbook and learn how to make fungi, kalaloo and a variety of fish dishes. Place mats and kitchen towels with local designs are great gift ideas.

Parrot Fish, Back Street. They have the island's best selection of Caribbean music.

Tradewinds Shop & Local Color, Waterfront. Tradewinds is a good stop if you'd like a gift with local color. Larimar jewelry, metal art depicting sea life, African art, model ships and shell jewelry are all displayed in this attractive shop. Its neighbor, Local Color, focuses on island T-shirts, sweatshirts and beach gear.

Captain's Corner, Main Street & Waterfront. Although the merchandise is similar, the Waterfront shop is larger and easier to browse. You'll see wood carvings, handicrafts, shells and shell crafts, nautical items and coral as well as beachwear, T-shirts, spices and coffees. Also at Havensight and Mountain Top.

Last Mango in Paradise, International Plaza. A large selection of Jimmy Buffett CDs, plus books, videos and "Caribbean Soul" T-shirts.

Purple Papaya, Main Street. Hawaiian shirts, sundresses, beach wear and bags are the lures here. They sell Cruzan rum as well.

Touched By The Sun, A.H. Riise Mall. You'll find the typical souvenirs here, but additionally you'll see the largest col-

lection of unique toys in the Caribbean. They make special gifts.



Don't forget **Vendors Plaza** (mentioned previously) for inexpensive gifts and souvenirs.

Grog & Spirits

Alcoholic beverages are real bargains here and you'll have no trouble finding your favorite brands. Aged Scotch, Russian vodka, liqueurs from all over the world, French champagne and wine are everywhere. All you need is money! Best buys are in local supermarkets, but the name brands are not always available there and they don't pack. So, head for **Al Cohen's** (opposite Havensight Mall, a 10-minute walk from downtown). It's a liquor supermarket. The bottles are stacked on and in crates and you help yourself. The prices are a few cents less than downtown, but the store may be out of your way. Best bet downtown is **A.H. Riise** on Main Street. Both shops have weekly specials with exceptional buys. They pack your purchase in easy-to-carry cartons and you can check them as baggage. They sell cigarettes and cigars as well.

Art Galleries

Tillett Gardens Art Center, Tutu (Route 38). More than a gallery, this is an art center where you can walk from shop to shop and see local artists at work. The key shop is **Jim Tillett's Design Gallery**, where they continue Jim's tradition of silkscreen art. His screen maps are found in hotel lobbies and restaurants throughout the Caribbean. Small restaurants and a garden setting make this a great first stop. If you're lucky enough to be here for the Arts Alive festival you'll see works from artists throughout the Caribbean. ☎ (340) 775-1929 or visit www.tillettgardens.com for schedules.

Jonna White Gallery, Main Street. Vivid scenes of the Caribbean in striking colors. Also paper sculptures and etchings, all by Ms. White.

Gallery St. Thomas, Grand Galleria, Garden Street. The Grand Galleria shop features historical maps and prints of Caribbean life. The Garden Street shop (near Government Hill) features the works of Lucinda Schutt, who was the resident artist at Caneel Bay Resort (St. John) and the Robert Mondavi Winery in Napa Valley. Also look for works by David Hill, a well-known St. Thomian. Over 30 artists are represented.

Camille Pissarro Gallery, Main Street. Pissarro, considered the Father of Impressionism, was born in this building at 14 Main Street. The second-floor gallery features his prints and those of his son. Thirty-six other artists are also represented.

Into The Sea, Royal Dane Mall. Here you'll find arts and crafts made in the Virgin Islands, including a wide variety of ceramic and glass art, paintings and prints and attractive ornaments.

Bambini Gallery, Royal Dane Mall. This fine arts gallery features works by owners Ellen Swane and Vincent Bambini. She works on paper and canvas and even creates wearable art such as scarves. He specializes in seascapes, nudes and people at work or play.

Kilnworks Pottery & Art Gallery, Route 38, East End. Look for the big iguana that marks the entrance to this lovely pottery salon. You can watch owner Peggy Seiwert and her staff work and buy her signature pieces that feature colorful lizards.

Best Places to Stay



Visitors to St. Thomas are lucky when it comes to hotel accommodations. While most islands have only a limited number of hotels, usually lavish resort complexes, St. Thomas

has a seemingly endless variety of accommodations – one to fit your plans and pocketbook. **Frenchman's Reef** is the only highrise hotel on the island. Others are composed of two- and three-story buildings strung along a beach or nestled on a hillside. Profusions of flowering shrubs and trees make these small buildings blend in with the natural environment. Several of these hostelries are individually owned, while others are part of renowned hotel groups. The smaller "in-town" choices operate rather like European pensions.

You might also consider renting a condominium – an option very popular for families with young children. These come with full kitchen facilities, often with maid service, all the social activities of a hotel and the added plus of saving money on food costs.

Virtually all hotel rooms are air-conditioned, but some retain ceiling fans and utilize the natural breezes from the trade winds. A few hotels will add an energy surcharge to your bill for the air-conditioner and TV.

Seasonal Savings



"High season" refers to the period between December 15th and April 30th. Rates during this time average 25% higher than those in the low season. You can save a considerable amount of money if you plan your visit for spring, summer, or fall. Another way to save some money is with the package tours offered by travel agents, airlines, and hotels. These include honeymoons, scuba diving, tennis, and golf.



There is always a **shortage of water** on St. Thomas (and the other islands as well). Rain, when it falls, is collected in cisterns and is a very precious commodity. Therefore, most hotels will have showers rather than tubs.

All our hotel selections take major credit cards, are air-conditioned and have private baths, unless specifically noted.

St. Thomas Hotel Price Scale

To give you a ballpark figure to budget with, we have devised the scale below. It is based on the price of a double room in high season (Dec 15 to April 30). It does not take hotel amenities into account. At other times you can expect to pay 25% less. Inquire about special rates as part of a travel package.

Deluxe	$400+
Expensive	$301-$400
Moderate	$200-$300
Inexpensive	under $200



An 8% government tax will be added to your rate each night.

Resorts



Set off by themselves on picturesque coves, quiet beaches, and mountaintops overlooking the sea, these resorts often offer all the amenities one looks for in a vacation spot. Unlike many areas where hotels stand side-by-side along a beach and are virtually identical, each of these resorts has its own distinctive style. Many are set on the island's East End, closer to Red Hook than Charlotte Amalie – although none is more than 30 minutes from town. Several East End resorts have built condominium complexes on-property. Called villas, they include daily maid service and use of all hotel facilities. Rentals are handled through the hotel. Other villa complexes are not a part of hotels but have many of the same amenities. Units at these complexes are handled by rental agents.

THE RITZ CARLTON, ST. THOMAS
Great Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-3333; www.ritzcarlton.com
Reservations: (800) 241-3333
Deluxe

A spectacular 30-acre oceanfront estate along Great Bay on the eastern end of St. Thomas houses the island's most luxurious resort. At first glance you may think you took the wrong turn and somehow ended up in Florence, Italy. Atop the hillside sits a burnished Renaissance palace. There are marble floors, graceful columns that frame arched entranceways, pale pastel walls and ornate chandeliers. But the view of the sea and St. John from the wide terrace assures you that you are still in the Caribbean.

Accommodations include over 200 guestrooms and suites housed in Mediterranean-style villas in a semi-circle facing Great Bay. They are luxurious, with private terraces facing the bay or the award-winning gardens. Contemporary fabrics in muted tones and West Indian mahogany and wicker give the rooms a comfortable ambience. All have oversized marble baths, a stocked refreshment center, a safe, dataport, designer robes, cable TV with in-room movies and hairdryer among the amenities.

A recent renovation has added 24 rooms and suites in a private "Club Level" villa. It has a private lounge and concierge service.

Stone staircases lead from the hilltop main building through landscaped gardens to beaches on Great Bay and Coconut Cove. There is an infinity edge pool as well as an oversized guitar-shaped traditional pool. There is a Jacuzzi as well. The gardens are spectacular, with 290 species of plants, exotic birds and animals. Garden tours are conducted daily.

The on-site Patagon water-sports center has non-motorized watersports equipment including Hobie Cats and Sunfish. They also offer scuba trips, day-sails and sunset cruises on the hotel's catamaran, *Lady Lynsey*. Tennis enthusiasts can

play on four Astro-turf courts. Most guests head to the state-of-the-arts spa and fitness center which was added during the renovation. There are treatment rooms, open-air cabanas and a fully-equipped workout studio. Massage therapies, body and facial treatments, hair removal and nail care services are offered.

Families will appreciate the "Ritz Kids" program for children four-12 and the baby sitting service for evenings.

The hotel offers several dining options – informal and formal. The **Iguana Bar** serves lunch as does the **Coconut Cove Beach Bar**. The casual **Palm Garden Café** serves breakfast and dinner and often has local bands. The sophisticated **Great Bay Grill** serves dinner and Sunday brunch.



Eighty villas are nearing completion. They are for sale but will also be available for rental.

MARRIOTT FRENCHMAN'S REEF
Box 7100, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 776-8500; www.marriottfrenchmansreef.com
Reservations: (800) 223-6388
Deluxe-expensive

To many visitors a trip to St. Thomas is synonymous with a stay at Frenchman's Reef. It is the island's social center and it's the largest (over 400 rooms) and most exciting hotel. It sits on a promenade that extends into the harbor and is visible from downtown Charlotte Amalie. The hotel entrance is marked by towering palm trees that are lit dramatically at night.

Many guests rarely leave the hotel grounds and yet have a great time. While I definitely don't suggest doing that (the island has too much to offer), Frenchman's tries hard to fill your days and nights with enjoyable activities. The social staff arranges welcome parties, wine- and rum-tasting soirées, bingo games, movies, garden tours and steel

band/limbo nights. Snorkel lessons are given in one of the hotel's two adjacent pools daily. Take the glass-enclosed elevator down two levels to the beach if you prefer your swim in salt water. Morning Star Beach also houses the Reef's tennis courts, a pro shop, a small eatery and market.

The upper lobby has been greatly expanded and the red- and gold-toned furniture has been placed to create intimate conversation areas. The lobby bar is adjacent to an outer terrace that overlooks the entrance to the harbor. There is a small upscale shopping arcade. At **Presto Marketplace** you can pick up bagels and coffee for breakfast and deli sandwiches for a picnic lunch.

The lower lobby is the hotel's dining and entertainment center, incorporating the Reef's three restaurants. **Windows on the Harbour** is best known for its steak, lobster and elaborate seafood buffets. **The Sunset Grill and Bar** serves lunch at poolside, while the **Captain's Café** offers a light menu with deli-style sandwiches, burgers and salads. Open for lunch and dinner, it has a popular bar as well.

Rooms and suites, both in the main building and in the wings, are spacious and many have private terraces. There are 21 duplex suites on the "Top of the Reef" floor of the hotel tower and eight "lanai" suites on the ground floor of the Sunset wing. Rooms have king-size or double beds, cable TV, voice mail, refrigerators, and in-room safes. There is a health club and spa adjacent to the pools. (See *Spas*.)

The **Adventure Water Sports Center** has windsurfing equipment, snorkel gear, kayaks and Jet Skis for guests. They can arrange scuba trips, day-sails and fishing trips. There is even an in-house helicopter for sightseeing. Tired of driving? Take the water taxi from the hotel dock right into Charlotte Amalie.

MARRIOTT MORNING STAR BEACH RESORT
Box 7100, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 776-8500; www.marriottfrenchmansreef.com
Reservations: (800) 2223-6388
Deluxe

On the beach below the highrise complex where an informal resort once stood, you'll find 96 special accommodations. Marriott Morning Star Beach Resort offers oversized luxurious rooms in a series of three-level buildings surrounded by flowering hibiscus, oleander, flamboyant and frangipani.

Cleverly designed for maximum privacy, each room has a terrace with an ocean view and a large comfortable sitting area. Complimentary champagne, an in-room safe, cable TV, in-house videos, hairdryer, iron and ironing board and comfortable bathrobes are all offered.

Guests at Morning Star have full use of the facilities at Frenchman's Reef, but the best facility was made by Mother Nature – the beautiful Morning Star Beach. Lounges, floats and umbrellas are available at the Beach Shack. There is a new pool with a wrap-around sundeck adjacent to the tennis courts. A Jacuzzi is here as well.

Mariott Morning Star is laid back and very secluded. There is free morning coffee, but most guests head to **Coco Joe's** on the beach. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Nearby, **Star Market** is great for take-out. Morning Star houses a gourmet restaurant, **Havana Blue**. Open only for dinner, it serves Cuban-Caribbean fusion cuisine.

SAPPHIRE BEACH RESORT & MARINA
Box 8088
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 775-6100; www.sapphirebeachresort.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2090
Expensive

It's hard to find a vacation destination that is right both for adults and for children. Here at Sapphire Beach, you can

spend as much time as you like with your children, but you can easily put aside some time to read a book, sail a Sunfish or head to the downtown shops. That's because there is a "KidsKlub" program where children age four-12 can have a great time. The staff organizes beach ball relays, hermit crab races and limbo contests. There is also a Teen program. A NiteKlub program (5:30-10) allows the children to watch movies and do arts and crafts under supervision while you relax over a leisurely dinner. Additional fees apply for KidsKlub and NiteKlub.



Children under 12 do not pay for either food or lodging when they stay in the same rooms as their parents. It's hard to beat that.

But Sapphire is not a giant camp. This is a luxurious resort with 171 suites and villas arranged in low-rise clusters on 30 seaside acres. Each accommodation features a private balcony facing either the ocean or yacht harbor, a full kitchen, king-sized beds, satellite TV and sleeper sofa beds. Suites, on the first and second floors of the four-story buildings, can accommodate four guests. The villas, on the third and fourth levels, are all duplexes. They can sleep six.

The half-mile beach is scattered with lounge chairs and the watersports center is one of the most active on the island. It has Sunfish, windsurfers and snorkeling gear as well as water toys. Dive In, the on-site diving center, organizes scuba trips and many fishing trips leave from the on-site marina. There is a two-tiered freshwater pool with a swim-up bar.

Sapphire has several dining options. The **Pretty Klip Pool Bar and Grille** is a casual dining spot for lunch and dinner. The **W' Indies Island Eatery** serves all three meals. Sitting on the beach, it serves Continental cuisine with a Caribbean flair. The **Beach Bar**, in the entertainment center, hosts island musicians and shows several nights a week. The **Steakhouse on the Point** serves dinner in high season only.

Every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 pm, the beach at Sapphire is the setting for a reggae beach party where the island's best bands play. It draws people from all over St. Thomas and from St. John. If you enjoy reggae, this is the place to be. Luxurious and informal at the same time, Sapphire is an island favorite.



Sapphire is expanding. A convention center and entertainment center should be complete by the time you visit.

WYNDHAM SUGAR BAY RESORT & SPA
6500 Estate Smith Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 777-7100; www.wyndham.com
Reservations: (800) 927-7100
Expensive

The Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort was built on the grounds of a sugar plantation. The reception area and the Manor House restaurant are in the magnificent colonial Great House, which is fully restored. The lobby has polished marble floors, Oriental area rugs, high ceilings alive with whirling fans and graceful palm plants. The furniture is ornate with curved legs and floral prints. It would look like a museum display, but for the guests in tennis attire or carrying snorkel gear. There's a small shopping arcade.

The mauve stucco buildings that house the guest rooms (300) are built into the hillside so that each has a great view of St. John and the BVI from a private balcony. Rooms are good size and the double or king-size beds have colonial headboards. There are small sitting areas as well. Room amenities include both air-conditioning and fans, coffee maker, mini-bar, cable TV and in-room movies.

Many guests opt for the all-inclusive rate here, although there is also an EP (European Plan – no food) option. The all-inclusive plan covers your accommodation, all meals (including themed dinners and alcoholic beverages), free use of

the fitness center, tennis courts and non-motorized watersports equipment. Only treatments at the beautiful Journeys Spa (see *Spas*) are extra.

A lagoon is on the shore near the beach and there are three interconnecting freshwater pools and a delightful waterfall. A suspension bridge leads to the beach where windsurfers, sailboats, Wave Runners and parasailing are all available. The hotel has four lighted tennis courts, including a stadium court that can seat 200 people. Fitness buffs will enjoy the 1/3-mile "Fit Trail," which has 10 strengthening exercise stations.

Sugar Bay has a Kids Klub program for children four-12 and baby-sitting services can be arranged.

Dining and imbibing options include the more formal **Manor House**, which offers panoramic views and Continental-Caribbean cuisine. The casual **Mangrove Café** is best known for its luncheon buffets. You can eat at the **Iguana Grill** at poolside or have a drink at the adjacent **Turtle Rock Sports Bar**. The **Ocean Club** is the evening entertainment center.

Parking is at the bottom of the hill, as are the beach, tennis courts and restaurant. It's quite a hike to the Manor House and guest rooms, so a shuttle bus makes the run continuously.

BOLONGO BAY BEACH CLUB & VILLAS
7150 Estate Bolongo
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-1800; www.bolongobay.com
Reservations: (800) 524-4746
Moderate

Stunning beach strips are not uncommon on St. Thomas. One of the loveliest, a 1,000-ft. arc, is on the island's southeast coast. It was here that Dick and Joyce Doumeng built their renowned resort, Bolongo. Over 30 years later, Bolongo is still owned and operated by the Doumengs, with son Rich-

ard at the helm and scores of other Doumengs in key positions. They credit their day-to-day involvement for Bolongo's success and few can argue with that.

Always innovative, Bolongo offers a variety of rate plans. Their all-inclusive plan includes three meals, a day-sail and snorkel cruise, use of the fitness center and a host of watersports. This plan has caused guests to dub the resort "Club Everything." There is a semi-inclusive plan and a European plan available as well.

Bolongo's 75 guest rooms are set in two- and three-story buildings at the edge of the beach. Large and comfortably tropical in décor, the rooms have air-conditioning, cable TV, kitchenette and terrace.

Should you need more space, consider a stay at one of Bolongo's 20 two-bedroom villas. They sit at the far end of the beach with their own pool. Villas have full kitchens and guests have complete hotel privileges. You can pay extra for maid service and food.

If you want nothing more than to pull your chaise lounge under a palm tree and catch up on your reading, its easy to do so. Those who prefer active vacations have a myriad of choices. There are basketball and tennis courts as well as a well-stocked watersports center with Jet Skis, windsurfers and water bikes. The **St. Thomas Diving Club** here offers full PADI scuba courses as well as scuba trips. The hotel catamaran goes to St. John daily.

The Bolongo Beach House is where breakfast and dinner are served. It has a good-size pool with a popular swim-up bar. **Iggies**, a combination beach shack and sports bar, serves a typical bar menu plus some dinner specials. It stays open late.

Informal and affordable, Bolongo is a good choice.

SECRET HARBOUR BEACH
Resort & Villas
6280 Estate Nazareth
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-6550; www.secretharbourvi.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2250
Expensive/Moderate

This is a posh all-suite complex on a secluded peninsula on the East End. It has 60 suites, located in three-story buildings overlooking a stunning beach. There are 42 beachfront accommodations and 18 others on the hillside above the beach. There are studios and one- and two-bedroom units, all with private terraces. Four ADA compliant oceanfront rooms ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. All suites have complete kitchens.

The resort's facilities are first-rate and many watersports activities are readily available. They include snorkel gear, windsurfers and water toys. Aqua Action, an outstanding scuba-dive operator is located here. There is a pool, three tennis courts and a fitness center. The **Blue Moon Café** serves all meals. Located on the beach, it is quite casual, but the dinner menu is always inventive.

POINT PLEASANT RESORT
6600 Estate Smith Bay, #4
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-7200; www.pointpleasantresort.com
Reservations: (800) 777-1770
Expensive

Looking for the perfect spot for a romantic rendezvous? Then pack your bags and head directly to Point Pleasant. Secluded villa-style suites, all individually and tastefully furnished, are scattered along a hillside overlooking the aquamarine waters of Pillsbury Sound and its purple-hued islands. Accommodations include standard suites (no separate bedroom), deluxe suites (one bedroom plus a sleeping sofa), and even more spacious two-bedroom suites that can

accommodate up to seven people. All suites have full kitchens, air-conditioning and balconies with stirring views.

The accommodations are encircled by 15 acres of lush flowering bushes and tropical trees. Small paths lead downhill to private Sugar Beach and to the complex's three swimming pools. Others lead to small sunning areas, so unobtrusive that they scarcely disturb the natural environment.

All beach equipment, including Sunfish and windsurfers, are free for your use. The one tennis court at the entrance can be lit for night play. Sadly, it seems underutilized. A nice touch here is that management gives guests free use of an automobile for four hours each day of their stay. Reserve time at the front desk.

The Agave Terrace Restaurant specializes in seafood and draws many locals for dinner. **Fungi's On the Beach** serves burgers for lunch and authentic West Indies specialties for dinner. You can easily visit nearby resorts or the Red Hook Dock area for other dining choices.

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE
Box 7480, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 774-1600; www.bluebeards-castle.com
Reservations: (800) 524-6599
Moderate

Bluebeard's is the oldest operating hotel on the island and a traditional center for St. Thomian society. It opened in the 1930s and was visited by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1934. Set dramatically on its own hill overlooking the town and harbor, the hotel has undergone many changes in recent years. Modern amenities, including a well-equipped fitness center, are the upside of those changes; overbuilding is the downside. Bluebeard's has virtually doubled in size since the first edition of this guide, but the 20-acre hilltop that houses it hasn't changed. A few cannons and a charming tower are all that remain from the fortress of Bluebeard the Pirate. From this tower, he watched for treasure-laden gal-

leons and guests can watch for sparkling cruise ships, sleek sailboats and sunsets.

There are 192 rooms set across the hill in a series of two-story buildings. Rooms have been redecorated and include kitchenettes, cable TVs and king-size beds. The new buildings have eclipsed the ponds, stone paths and tall flowering bushes that gave Bluebeard's a resort-hotel ambience.



One wing of the hotel has been converted into **timeshare units**. Attractively decorated, these studios and one-bedroom villas can also be rented.

Bluebeard's boasts a large freshwater pool complete with two whirlpools and well-maintained tennis courts, which can be lit for night play. Shuttle bus service is provided to Bluebeard's Beach Club and Villas and Elysian, two sister resorts set on lovely beach strips.

Bluebeard's dining options are still outstanding. In the evening you can have cocktails on the multi-level terraces at **The Banana Tree Grille**, where Chef Patrick Bellatoni's menu blends a taste of Italy with a hint of Asia and the West Indies. The ambiance is informal. Nearby, **Room With A View** is an intimate gourmet eatery with floor-to-ceiling windows that overlook the town and harbor. The menu changes frequently. A late-night menu is served from 10 pm to 1 am. Closed Sun. ☎ 774-2377.

PAVILIONS & POOLS HOTEL
6400 Estate Smith Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-6110: www.pavilionsandpools.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2001
Expensive

There are 25 swimming pools here – one for each pavilion. While the pavilions themselves are attached units, the areas in front of them are so cleverly designed and planted that no

pool or patio is visible from any other. You can have total privacy to skinny dip or sunbathe au naturel in front of your own pool.

There are two types of pavilions: The **Caribbean Pavilion**, 1,200 square ft., has a 16 x 18-ft. swimming pool and garden patio. The larger **International Pavilion** has 1,400 square ft., and a 20 x 14-ft. pool and sunken garden. They each have one bedroom, a living room that can sleep two on a sofa bed, fully equipped kitchen, and glass walls with sliding doors that open out onto the patio. Both your pavilion and your pool are cleaned daily.

If you venture out of your private eyrie, you'll find beautifully landscaped grounds with sparkling waterfalls and lush vegetation. While Pavilions has no beach of its own, you can stroll along the shore to Smith Bay or Sapphire Beach. Free use of Sapphire's tennis courts and watersports equipment can be arranged by the front desk. Continental breakfast (complimentary) is served at the **Fish Pond Café**. Dinner and cocktails are also offered there, although most guests head to Red Hook or other restaurants nearby.

 Lots of honeymooners come here.

MAGENS POINT RESORT
Magen's Bay Road
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 777-6000; www.magenspoint.com
Moderate

Perched on a hilltop overlooking Magens Bay, which *National Geographic* magazine called "one of the 10 best beaches in the world," is the rustic yet elegant Magens Point Resort. Everything here has been done with flair and panache to take full advantage of the superb natural setting. Fifty-two suites located in two buildings are carpeted, have two double beds, modern furnishings, colorful accessories, small refrigerators, and Caribbean art on the walls. The view from your terrace is spectacular. The main building,

built of stone with a shingle roof, houses the well-known **Indigo Restaurant**, which is poolside. There are two "five star" rated tennis courts and a large swimming pool on the property. Magens Point Resort is adjacent to the Mahogany Run Golf Course and free shuttle buses take guests to the course and to Magens Bay Beach daily.

In addition to the suites, time-share villas have been built here. These are comfortably furnished, face the bay, have full use of hotel facilities and maid service.

BEST WESTERN EMERALD BEACH RESORT
8070 Lindbergh Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 777-8800; www.emeraldbeach.com
Reservations: (800) 233-4936
Moderate

A charming small hotel, Emerald Beach Resort overlooks Lindbergh Bay and is just minutes from the airport. All 90 rooms have private balconies, marble baths, cable TV and wet bars with mini-bars. The freshwater swimming pool overlooks the beach where the watersports shack has snorkeling, windsurfers and Sunfish. They can arrange scuba trips for you. There is a restaurant, as well as a snack grill on the beach. There is a tennis court as well. The hotel grounds are beautifully landscaped.

THE ISLAND BEACHCOMBER
302579 Lindbergh Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00803
☎ (340) 774-5250; wwwst-thomas.com/islandbeachcomber
Reservations: (800) 982-9898
Inexpensive

The Beachcomber has a faithful coterie of guests who return year after year and several fast friendships have sprung up among them. The key here is informality. You can spend virtually your entire stay in a bathing suit and have a great time. Adjacent to the airport and directly on Lindbergh Bay (named for Charles, who visited here), the Beachcomber's 47

rooms are all air-conditioned and have small refrigerators. Rooms are in several two-story buildings along the beach and each has a private patio or terrace. Beachfront rooms run $10 more per night.

The island you can swim to in Lindbergh Bay is **Saba** and it's great for snorkeling. Or you can take a boat a mile out in the bay to **Porpoise Rocks**, which has coral reefs, and catch a lobster for your dinner. The hotel does just that and serves them at their seaside restaurant. By the way, this eaterie is the perfect place to sample local dishes which are often on the menu. Attire for dining is also informal. Only a beach cover-up is required, although most guests wear shorts and T-shirts.



Emerald Beach, **Beachcomber** and **Carib Beach** are adjacent to the airport and can be noisy at times.

BEST WESTERN CARIB BEACH RESORT
70-C Lindbergh Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 774-2525; www.caribbeachresort.com
Reservations: (800) 792-2742
Moderate

The first time I visited St. Thomas was on my honeymoon and we stayed at the Carib Beach Hotel. The friendly atmosphere hasn't changed much, but the facilities have certainly expanded. A deluxe 19-room building has been added to the original two-story white-washed building that houses 79 rooms – all impeccably clean and attractively decorated in tropical colors. All have air-conditioning, cable TV and, best of all, private terraces that look out at the beautiful palm-fringed Lindbergh Beach. Across the road from the main building is a private beach on Lindbergh Bay and a pocket-sized pool. Breakfast and dinner are served at the **Pavilion Terrace Restaurant** near the beach. It has daily West Indian specials and there is a barbecue with live music every Friday night. The hotel is surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens with tropical foliage and exotic flowers.

Villa Resorts

SECRET HARBOUR BEACH RESORT & VILLAS
6280 Estate Nazareth
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-6550; www.st-thomas.com/shb.vi
Reservations: (800) 524-2250
Moderate

This is a posh condominium complex on a secluded peninsula on the East End. Its 53 apartments are located in three-story buildings overlooking a stunning beach. Since many apartments are privately owned, they are individually furnished, but invariably are attractive and well cared for. First-floor apartments have patios, while others have terraces facing the beach. There are studios and one- and two-bedroom apartments. All have kitchen facilities and daily maid service. Four ADA-compliant oceanfront rooms ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. The rooms have wet bars and private balconies. They provide access to the beach, restaurant, dive shop, fitness center and lobby.

The resort's facilities are first-rate and many watersports activities are available at the beachfront shack. They have snorkel gear, windsurfers and sailboats. **Agua Action** offers dive courses. There are tennis courts, a pool and a fitness center.

The Blue Moon Café, a bar and restaurant complex, sits on the beach.

BLUEBEARD'S BEACH CLUB & VILLAS
100 Frenchman's Bay
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 776-4770; www.eqivest.com
Reservations: (800) 524-6599
Moderate

Part of the Bluebeard's group and completely renovated, the 84 Caribbean-style units have been reopened. They are set

in an arc with all units facing Limetree Beach. There are 56 guest rooms and 28 loft suites. All are decorated with multi-colored fabrics and pastel accents on the walls. They have air-conditioning, cable TV, and in-room safes.

Facilities include two tennis courts, a beachside free-form pool and a complete watersports center with complimentary sailboats, kayaks, snorkeling gear and windsurfers.

A casual open-air restaurant serves all three meals. You'll be joined by iguanas that live in the moat nearby. The lounge, on top of the hill, has regularly scheduled entertainment.

Shuttle buses connect guests with Bluebeard's Castle Hotel and the Elysian Beach Resort, where all amenities are available for use.

ELYSIAN BEACH RESORT
6800 Estate Nazareth
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 775-1000; www.equivest.com
Reservations: (800) 753-2554
Moderate

The Elysian, on quiet Cowpet Bay on St. Thomas' East End, offers 180 units in white-washed three-story buildings. Accommodations include studios, one- and two-bedroom suites and suites with lofts. Many have terraces and fully equipped kitchens. All have cable TV, a VCR, an in-room safe and air-conditioning.

Amenities include a free-form pool with waterfall, a whirlpool, health club and fitness center with complimentary use of sailboats, kayaks, snorkel gear, and windsurfers.

There are two restaurants at the resort. **Bonnie's by the Sea** is on the lower level of the main building. It serves all three meals daily with live music several nights a week at dinner. **Robert's American Grille** is an informal eaterie near the pool and beach. Regional American dishes are

served at dinner every night but Monday. Sunday brunch is popular here.

A shuttle bus links the Elysian with its sister resorts, Bluebeard's Castle Hotel and Bluebeard's Beach Club and Villas.



Gym Sweeney and **Sea Grape Spa** are located in the hotel.

THE ANCHORAGE BEACH RESORT
Rte 317 Estate Nazareth, East End
Rental Agent, Antilles Resorts
☎ (340) 775-2600, (800) 524-2025; www.antillesresorts.com
Expensive

Anchorage, a very attractive villa complex, is on Cowpet Bay adjacent to the St. Thomas Yacht Club. An intimate hideaway, it has 30 one- and two-bedroom suites which have fully equipped kitchens, laundry facilities, cable TV and air conditioners. The resort has beautiful grounds, a quiet beach, fresh water pool and two lighted tennis courts. There is an informal open-air restaurant and fitness center on property. Anchorage is two miles from Red Hook.

SAPPHIRE VILLAGE
Rte 38, Sapphire Bay, East End
Rental Agent, Antilles Resorts
☎ (340) 775-2600, (800) 524-2025; www.antillesresorts.com
Moderate

Sapphire Village sits on the hillside overlooking Sapphire Beach Resort. Guests here have full use of all the hotel and marina facilities. Many guests here are snowbirds, who return annually to avoid cold winters. There are 35 units here and each has a small kitchen. Private balconies overlook the beach and marina. The village has its own pool and its restaurant, **Azure**, is best known for its Thai food at dinner.

Villa Rental Agencies

Several local companies specialize in renting villas that are part of a complex with individual facilities or associated with a hotel. Others act as rental agents for privately owned villas and cottages. Among the most reliable agencies are:

ANTILLES RESORTS
Based on St. Croix, they manage rentals for The Anchorage and Sapphire Village (noted previously). They are also rental agents for Crystal Cove Villas, which are on Sapphire Beach near the resort. ☎ (800) 524-2025; www.antilles-resorts.com.

CALYPSO REALTY
Calypso acts as rental agent for exclusive villas and beachfront condos scattered over St. Thomas. ☎ (800) 747-4858; www.calypsorealty.com.

BLAZING VILLAS
Marc and Marianne Blazar act as rental agents for their 13 units on Pineapple Beach (just outside the Grand Beach Resort). Each villa has a studio suite and three additional guest rooms to accommodate families. ☎ (800) 382-2002; www.blazingvillas.com.

MCLAUGHLIN ANDERSON LUXURY VILLAS
They offer weekly rentals at the exclusive Ritz Carlton residences as well as over 150 private rental villas and homes. ☎ (800) 537-6246; www.mclaughlinanderson.com.

Small Hotels & Guest Houses

The following smaller places are located in, above and around Charlotte Amalie. Once again, they are not a homogeneous group. Some are within walking distance of the commercial center, while others are rather isolated and a car would be a big plus. A few have small swimming pools, while

others provide shuttle service to nearby beaches. These places offer less opulent creature comforts and are therefore less expensive. They are often picturesque and offer a warm, friendly, home-away-from-home atmosphere. We recommended them for the active vacationer who likes to explore independently.

THE INN AT BLACKBEARD'S CASTLE
Box 6227, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 776-1234; www.blackbeardscastle.com
Moderate

Since it was built by the notorious pirate as a watchtower to scan the Caribbean for enemy ships, Blackbeard's Castle has been a plantation and a private estate. Now Blackbeard's hideaway can be yours. The present owners have renovated the historic tower (it sparkles) and grounds, and constructed an intimate 16-room inn. Most accommodations are suites on the main level of the hotel. They offer views of town and the harbor. Amenities include air-conditioning, ceiling fans, small refrigerators, cable TV, voice mail, and in-room safes. All have private baths.

Steps from your door is the tower, which guards the large swimming pool, sundeck and flower-filled gardens. The restaurant is currently closed.

HOTEL 1829
Box 1567, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 776-1829; www.hotel1829.com
Moderate-expensive

Looking for an inn that combines old world charm with modern convenience? Look no further. Head for Hotel 1829, which opened for business in that year and has been in operation ever since. Built in Spanish style by a French sea captain, the hotel was owned by a world backgammon champion for a time, which may account for the backgam-

mon tables in the bar. It sits adjacent to the old Danish street, called 99 Steps, and you reach it by walking up steep Government Hill. Hotel 1829 has provided lodgings for such luminaries as King Carol of Rumania, Edna St. Vincent Millay and the characters from Charlie's Angels. Recent restoration of the hotel rooms has preserved the original brick ceilings, walls with coral and shells imbedded in them, heavy wooden shutters and 200-year-old Moroccan tiles. There are 17 rooms, each with double beds, sitting area, small refrigerator and cable TV. The three suites are larger and have canopied beds, separate sitting areas, dark mahogany walls and harbor views. The rooms around the small pool are the least expensive since they have no view. All are air-conditioned and some have ceiling fans as well.

VILLA SANTANA
2D Denmark Hill, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 776-1311; www.villasantana.com
Moderate

This lovely country villa is high above town on Denmark Hill. It was built in the 1950s by General Santa Ana of Mexico and is an all-suite option (seven units). The guest rooms are located in the estate's former library, its old wine cellar, old kitchen, the pump house, and elsewhere. All units have full kitchens, TV and ceiling fans. There are reminders of Mexico throughout from the colorful tiles, the stonework and the bold fabrics on the dark rattan furniture. There is a pool and sundeck. You can walk into town, but a car would be a plus.

MAFOLIE
Box 1506, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
☎ (340) 774-2790; www.mafolie.com
Reservations: (800) 225-7035
Moderate-Inexpensive

Clinging to the side of Mafolie Hill, 800 ft. above Charlotte Amalie, stands the 23-room and nine-suite Mafolie Hotel. Built in the style of a Mediterranean villa with five terraced

levels, the hotel and its first-rate restaurant are a fixture on St. Thomas.

Shrewdly making use of the limited space, rooms come in irregular shapes and sizes; no two are like. All the rooms have been renovated and refurnished, for Hurricane Hugo decimated the hotel and the restaurant. All rooms are air-conditioned and have cable TV. They are furnished in light woods and light cool fabrics, rather motel-like.

Request a room with a terrace and plan to be there for an unequaled view of the sunset. Those without terraces can enjoy the scene from the pool level or restaurant terrace. Continental breakfast is included in your rate. Transportation is provided daily to Magen's Bay. It's a stiff hike to town, but only a five-minute cab ride.

VILLA BLANCA HOTEL
4 Raphune Hill, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 776-0749; www.villablancahotel.com
Inexpensive

Villa Blanca's 12 rooms all have balconies and those that face west overlook Charlotte Amalie harbor. A circular home, the Villa Blanca is high (700 ft.) above town on Raphune Hill. The building, which has two levels, is surrounded by tropical flowers and plants. Rooms are quite modern, with rattan furniture, queen-sized beds, TVs and fully furnished kitchenettes. All have private bath, but some are not air-conditioned (they do have ceiling fans). Owner Blanca Smith is friendly and knowledgeable about St. Thomas. A car is a must.

MILLER MANOR
Box 1570, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00801
☎ (340) 774-1535
No Credit Cards
Inexpensive

Located on Frenchman's Hill above town, Miller Manor is operated in the European guest house tradition. Aida Miller

is the third generation of her family to run the Manor and she is very hospitable. Guests feel right at home and are encouraged to bring their own mixings to the patio Bottle Bar for Happy Hour each day at 5 pm. The 22 guest rooms, spread over four floors in different buildings, range from singles to two-bedroom apartments with kitchen facilities. Rooms vary from one section to the other (having been built at different times) and some retain old brick walls and antique furniture. Most rooms have ceiling fans. The two-bedroom apartments are perfect for families. Full breakfast is served on the terrace in high season.



You can walk up to the Manor from town, but **take a cab** at night.

ISLAND VIEW GUEST HOUSE
Box 1903, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00803
☎ (340) 774-4270;
www.st-thomas.com/islandviewguesthouse
Reservations: (800) 525-2023
Inexpensive

Perched on Crown Mountain, 550 ft. above Charlotte Amalie, Island View was originally a private house. It was converted to a guest house in 1969. The Gallery on the main floor serves as a breakfast nook (continental breakfast is part of your rate), lounge area and bar. It overlooks the pool and has a great view of the harbor. Often, a telescope is set up there so you can get a better view. There are 15 guest rooms (one is a suite), some with private baths. All rooms are neatly furnished and housekeeping is spotless. Ceiling fans only.

GALLEON HOUSE
Box 6577, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00804
☎ (340) 774-6952; www.galleonhouse.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2052
Inexpensive

The 14-room Galleon House is tucked away on Government Hill, which means it's an uphill climb to the front door. The

rooms are in two buildings, one of which is much older than the other. Breakfast is home-cooked and served on a central terrace overlooking the pool and sundeck. Communal refrigerators are set in the halls for guests to stock soft drinks and snacks. Rooms, which have brass nameplates, vary from building to building. Those in the newer building have harbor views, TVs, and king- and queen-sized beds. Most have private baths, but some share. The Galleon is not as well maintained as the last time we were here. Furnishings look worn. Recommended for those who care little for creature comforts.

BUNKER HILL HOTEL
7A Commandant Gade, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00802
☎ (340) 774-8056; www.bunkerhillhotel.com
Inexpensive

At the foot of Bunker Hill (just behind the commercial center), this white and pink, three-building establishment was once a small apartment complex. It was renovated in 1982. A series of steps connect the three buildings. Accommodations include rooms, suites and duplexes. All have private baths and are carpeted and air-conditioned. The suites, which are suitable for families, also have a kitchenette and patio. A full American breakfast is part of your rate. All rooms have TV sets. There are 18 guest rooms and three suites. Suites naturally run higher in price. Basic.

DANISH CHALET INN
Box 4319, Charlotte Amalie
St. Thomas, USVI 00803
☎ (340) 774-5764; www.danishchaletinn.com
Inexpensive

Frank and Mary Davis own this spotless inn on Frenchman's Hill, a 10-minute hike from town. Their 10 rooms are housed in three separate but attached buildings and the chalet is run rather like a guest house. It is warm, friendly and like a home away from home. Rooms are small but com-

fortably furnished and no two are the same. Several are air-conditioned; others have ceiling fans. Most rooms have private baths, but a few share a bathroom. Be specific when you make your reservation. Continental breakfast is part of your rate and is served on a terrace overlooking the town and harbor. Guests going to town can often hitch a ride with the owners, who are gracious hosts. Great spot for young people who don't spend much time in their rooms and enjoy the camaraderie of a guest house. No children under five are permitted. Inquire about special rates for week stays. You'll need a car here.

The Crystal Palace, a new bed and breakfast, is located at 12 Crystal Gade right in the heart of Charlotte Amalie. This small place has only five guest rooms. They are attractively decorated with eclectic mahogany and fruitwood furniture, Moroccan tiles and works of art. Three rooms share a bath, while the others have private bathrooms. The communal area, located between the rooms, has a refrigerator and a microwave oven. A continental breakfast is included. Call for rates. ☎ (340) 777-2277; www.crystalpalaceusvi.com.

The Green Iguana Guesthouse, on Blackbeard's Hill just above the historic district, has four guest rooms. Each has twin beds, a microwave oven, a small refrigerator and a toaster. Make your own breakfast, but you can enjoy lunch and dinner at the Inn at Blackbeard's Castle, which is next door. Use of their pool is also included. Call for rates. ☎ (340) 776-7654; www.thegreeniguana.com.

Best Places To Eat



To cap a perfect day, you can dine in any number of outstanding restaurants in Charlotte Amalie and scattered about the island. You need not confine yourself to eating in hotels (although several have excellent eateries) because St. Thomas is home to some of the Caribbean's finest restau-

rants. If variety is the spice of life, you'll certainly enjoy our selections, which were chosen for just that reason. Some are quite well known, while others are off the beaten track. There are many where you'll want to linger after dinner and others where you'll eat quickly and move on to another activity. They run the gamut in price, type of cuisine and setting.

Many restaurants have been built on open terraces facing west, so you can marvel at the kaleidoscope of colors as the sun sets behind the harbor. Most open for dinner at 6 pm, but the popular dinner hours are 7 to 9:30 pm.

Only a few of the top-rated choices serve lunch. Keep in mind that lunch is likely to be inexpensive. Since your days will be activity-filled, you'll often be eating a picnic lunch on the beach or a burger at poolside. We have noted some spots for lunch and light dining as well.

Reservations are a must in high season since most restaurants are small and people tend to linger after dinner. Many restaurants have live music during dinner hours. While casual dress is de rigueur, men will feel most comfortable in collared shirts and trousers in the fine dining establishments. Shorts are acceptable in open-air restaurants.



The **dress code** is more formal in the winter season than other times of the year.

The lack of rain and arable land on the island means that hardly any foods are grown here. Virtually everything is imported from the mainland. That, unfortunately, means that prices are higher than one would expect, although lower than top choices in New York or Paris. Choose a different restaurant each night of your stay and you'll enjoy each one thoroughly.

We have not attempted to list all the restaurants. Since one man's caviar is another's fish eggs, we realize that our choices may not always fit yours. Please write us of your "finds" so we can include them in the next edition, and if you

have an unhappy experience at one of our selections, we'd like to know that too. Send e-mail to comments@hunterpublishing.com or write c/o Hunter Publishing, 30 Campus Drive, Edison NJ 08818.

Local Foods

Sample some typical West Indian foods during your stay here. The greatest variety and most authentic dishes are served at small, family-owned eateries. Short on décor, they are long on such local favorites as conch, served as an appetizer or entrée. Local dolphin (the fish), also called mahi mahi, is served broiled or sautéed with a Provençal sauce. Another local fish, "old wife," is also worth sampling. Fungi (fongee), served as a side-dish, is made of cornmeal and ground vegetables. Callaloo, a thick soup of okra, ham, crabmeat and greens, is delicious. Tasty meat dishes include curried goat, mutton stew and chicken curry.

The there are desserts, such as soursop ice cream, sapodilla pudding and coconut and guava tarts. Alcoholic beverages are inexpensive, with rum-based drinks the most popular.

See "Traditional Foods" on page 22 for more details on local cuisine.

West Indian Buffets & Shows

Some of the large hotels set aside one evening a week for a West Indian buffet and show. Held on the beach or a patio at poolside, they are lovely ways to spend an evening – but not the place to sample the traditional West Indian foods discussed above. West Indian shows include steel bands, broken bottle dancing and the limbo. Some feature mocko jumbi (stiltwalkers), which are fun to see. The steel bands remain, but at this writing only two hotels have shows. Bolongo Bay Resort's buffet starts at 6:30 pm on Wed evenings. The show starts at 8 pm. You can also eat à la carte. Check the schedule. ☎ (340) 775-1800. Friday evenings there's a West Indian show in The Palms Restaurant at the Emerald Beach Re-

sort. Dinner starts at 6:30 pm. Check schedules at ☎ (340) 777-8800.

Money Matters



Virtually all restaurants accept major credit cards, although some small ones do not accept American Express. Check when making your reservation. You should reserve for dinner, particularly in high season. Tips are not included in your bill and you should tip your server 15-20%.



Hotel restaurants often include a service charge/tip. You can leave an additional amount for good service.

St. Thomas Restaurant Price Scale

Based on a three-course dinner (per person): appetizer or soup, main dish, dessert and coffee. Cocktails and wine are extra.

Expensive	over $45
Moderate	$30-$45
Inexpensive	under $30

If you enjoy splurging on dinner, keep in mind that breakfast and lunch (usually on the go) can be quite inexpensive.

Fine Dining Island-Wide

These are the best restaurants on St. Thomas. Several are in Frenchtown. Options include French, Italian, sushi and seafood dining in stunning locations.

CRAIG & SALLYS
22 Honduras, Frenchtown
☎ (340) 777-9949
Expensive
Lunch, dinner

While Sally works her magic in the kitchen, Craig is out front greeting guests as if each were a long-lost friend. You immediately feel right at home as you join other diners or just imbibers at the prominent bar. There are four small dining areas and each has a large mural that depicts life on the island. There is a different menu for lunch and dinner each day. New to both menus is the selection of tapas, which is served at tables during lunch, but at the bar only for dinner. Over a dozen choices daily, such as mahi ceviche, truffle mousse pate and smoked salmon with pickled grapes. Tapas are $5 each. Menus roam the globe so you might find lamb shank with vegetables over mashed potatoes, oven-roasted duck breast atop soba noodles and pan-seared halibut in an oyster stew. Sally's desserts are delicious as well. Craig is most proud of his wine list, with over 400 selections – many served by the glass. Lunch 11:30 am-2:30 pm Wed-Fri, dinner 5:30-10 pm Wed-Sun. Closed Mon-Tues year-round. Parking.

HERVÉ RESTAURANT & WINE BAR
Government Hill, Charlotte Amalie
☎ (340) 777-9703
Expensive
Lunch, dinner

With a wonderful location atop Government Hill, Hervé is a popular in-town choice for lunch as well as dinner. Owner Hervé Chassin has long been a fixture on the St. Thomas dining scene. His signature menu is a delicious mix of Caribbean and Continental cuisine. Climb the steps to the white-washed building with blood-red shutters adjacent to Hotel 1829. The dining room has white tablecloths, striped

high-back chairs and wraparound glass windows that offer a great view of the harbor.

The lunch menu features light fare such as shrimp and crab cocktails, assorted quiches, grilled sandwiches and salads. Lunch is often served at the open-air patio on the lower level. Dinner is much more formal, with starched tablecloths, fine china and glassware. Main courses feature roast duck with ginger and tamarind sauce, bouillabaisse, grilled lamb chops and sea bass.

Desserts include chocolate mousse and a white chocolate and pecan torte. Both are delicious. Lunch 11:30 am-2:30 pm Mon-Sat, dinner nightly 6-10 pm.

OCEANA
Villa Olga, Frenchtown
☎ (340) 774-4262
Expensive
Dinner only

Those of you who've been coming to St. Thomas for years, will be delighted, as we were, to find a new Patricia La Courte restaurant. Ms. La Courte, a well-respected St. Thomas chef, has lent her expertise to many restaurants over the years, but none with a more attractive setting. On a seaside peninsula in Frenchtown, Oceana occupies the site of Villa Olga, a private home that once served as the Russian Embassy. The restaurant is flanked by nearby Water and Hassel Islands. As you eat, you can hear the waves breaking and railside tables can feel the fine spray.

A huge array of salad fixings, Mediterranean-style grilled vegetables and freshly baked breads is displayed on the brick counter that separates the kitchen from the dining room.

The menu changes often, but always features fresh fish and shellfish. Provençale fish soup, steamed mussels or a trio of salmon tartare, gravlax and rillettes are popular openers. Polenta-crusted salmon is served with a lentil ragout and the oven-roasted sea bass is served in a yuzo miso broth with

bok choy, enoki mushrooms and spicy seaweed salad. There are also prime ribs, steaks and chicken dishes. Tiramisu and warm apple strudel are delicious desserts. Dinner 6-10 pm. Closed Sun. Parking available.



A wine bar menu is served in the cocktail lounge at Oceana and at tables on the terrace from 5 to 11 pm.

NOCHE
70 Honduras, Frenchtown
☎ (340) 774-3800
Expensive
Dinner

Honduras is Frenchtown's main drag and Noche, a relative newcomer to the island, has a prime location on it. Noche is St. Thomas' premier steakhouse and is the only place in the Caribbean that serves Ridgefield Farm Premium Hereford Beef, generally accepted as the finest beef available. The house specialty is a fabulous porterhouse (40 oz.) for two, but filet mignon, sirloin and NY strip steaks are also delicious. There is a rotisserie chicken, and Australian lobster tails, snapper and salmon choices as well. Starters include shrimp and lump-meat crab cocktails, clams casino and crab-stuffed mushrooms. Caesar salads are prepared at your table and lobster bisque has pieces of lobster in it.

Baked Alaska seems to be the most popular dessert, but there are pastries and sorbets too. Noche's décor is designed to replicate a hacienda in 19th-century Spanish Colonial America. The entrance leads to the largest dining area, dominated by a burnished bar with leather seats and couches. Dark shiny woods are also found on the booths, tables and massive chandeliers. At night, the white cloths and flickering candles make Noche perfect for a romantic evening. Dinner 5:30-10 pm. Parking.

OLD STONE FARMHOUSE
Mahogany Run
☎ (340) 777-6277
Expensive
Dinner only

Slightly off the beaten track, on the manicured grounds of the golf course, the Old Stone Farmhouse is well worth the extra drive time. It's set in the restored ruins of a 200-year-old great house that was the hub of a 250-acre Danish sugar plantation. The owners have retained the thick walls and burnished the charm of this lovely building by adding a brick courtyard and gurgling fountains. You can sip cocktails before dinner in the courtyard or in the main hall with its grand mahogany bar.

An extensive sushi menu includes tuna, eel, shrimp and avocado rolls, as well as tempura dishes. The general menu includes hickory-smoked hangar steak, three-day apple-roasted duck and tamarind-seared salmon. The service and presentation are flawless. The in-house pastry chef bakes a variety of breads each day as well as delicious desserts. Fruit sorbets are a lighter alternative. Dinner 5:30-10 pm Tues-Sun. Follow Route 40 to Route 42. Follow signs to Mahogany Run Golf Course and then to Old Stone Farmhouse.

ROMANO'S
Smith Bay Road (near Coral World)
☎ (340) 775-0045
Expensive
Dinner only

Word of mouth is the only way to hear about Romano's restaurant. It's not listed in any tourist literature and has long been a local secret. Small, it has only a dozen tables, each set with a white cloth, colorful fresh flowers and flickering candles. Tony Romano, the chef/owner, whose roots are in Sicily, opened this restaurant 10 years ago and it is frequently crowded with locals who consider it the best Italian restaurant on the island. The menu changes frequently since Tony

likes to try new dishes and use the freshest ingredients available. A recent menu had osso bucco, filet mignon with giant mushrooms and pollo picante (chicken with wine and capers). Fresh salads, stuffed mushrooms and roast peppers with anchovies are also popular items. The staff is knowledgeable and friendly. Service is very good. Tony likes to travel, so he closes the restaurant for Christmas week, the month of August and every Sun. Dinner only. 6-10 pm.



Tony also offers his culinary expertise as a personal chef. Villa renters take note! This service must be arranged well in advance.

West Indian Restaurants

You'll want to sample some West Indian specialties. See *Traditional Foods* on page 22. West Indian restaurants are often short on décor, but our selections are all attractive. We've also listed two in-town spots that serve these specialties at lunch. They do not serve dinner.

FUNGI'S ON THE BEACH
Pineapple Beach (Point Pleasant Resort)
☎ (340) 775-4142
Inexpensive
Lunch, dinner

This funky beachfront shack is a great place to sample native foods and to enjoy the reggae music. From 11:30 am to 5:30 pm Fungi's serves some of the island's best burgers and pizza, but when the sun sets the West Indian specialties take center stage.

The pig roast is smoked over hardwood. Stewed chicken, Creole-style fish, conch and onions in butter sauce or a grilled local lobster are all served with native rice (with peas), plantains, Johnny cakes and fungi. Inexpensive (under $15), they are delicious and filling. If you aren't that hungry, order a "roti," the Caribbean's answer to a wrap. It's

a pita-like bread, stuffed with curried chicken or conch and lots of vegetables. Fungi's local brews are well known too. Try a Sindbad's Passion or locally made Guavaberry brandy.

The drinks are cold, the music hot and the beach setting lovely. There is live entertainment almost every night. It's a lot of fun. Open 11 am-midnight. West Indies menu from 5:30 pm. Take Route 38 to Point Pleasant Resort

CUZZIN'S
7 Back Street, Charlotte Amalie
☎ (340) 777-4711
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

In the heart of the commercial center, Cuzzin's is a long, narrow restaurant with old brick walls and colorful paintings of Caribbean life done by local artists. Crowded at lunch time with shoppers and salespeople from shops nearby, it serves sandwiches, burgers and chef's salads, but it also offers West Indian foods such as conch Creole and the curried chicken that they make best. Dinner includes even more West Indian specialties, with an emphasis on fresh local seafood. Lobster stuffed with seafood, curried mutton or conch in butter sauce are served with fungi, plantains and other traditional side dishes. Wash your food down with a cooling ginger beer. Lunch 11 am-4 pm, dinner 5-9:30 pm. Closed Sun.

VICTOR'S HIDE-OUT
103 Sub-Base (near Nisky Center)
☎ (340) 776-9379
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

Hide-Out is a perfect name for this local favorite, which is not easy to find. It is in the Sub-Base, but just beyond the Nisky Center on the airport road. This is the second location for Victor's. It is larger than the earlier one and it has a view of Crown Bay Harbor, where some cruise ships dock. The

décor is minimalist, but the staff is very welcoming and the food is terrific. Many consider it the most authentic West Indian restaurant on the island, which explains why virtually all your fellow diners are locals. Caribbean lobster, fresh local fish, curried chicken and mutton stew are all favorites, as are the pork chops. Local bands play on the lower level at dinner. Lunch 11:30 am-4 pm, dinner 5:30-9:30 pm. Closed Sun.

Breakfast & West Indian Lunch

GLADYS' CAFÉ
Royal Dane Mall West
☎ (340) 777-6604
Inexpensive

Set in an air-conditioned Colonial warehouse, in the most attractive alley in town, Gladys' is the most popular breakfast stop in town. Hot cereals, thick French toast, lox and bagels and all kinds of omelettes are served. Gladys herself sets the tone for her informal eaterie, greeting each guest with a broad smile. Lunch starts at 11 am and the hot chicken salad is a top draw, followed by such West Indian dishes as salt fish and dumplings, curried goat, mutton stew and conch. There is a special "roti" (wrap) daily. Burgers, grilled sandwiches and pasta are served as well. Sample a fresh fruit colada with a splash of rum. Locals add Gladys' home-made hot sauce to virtually every dish. You can take some home for $5 or $10 a bottle. There are three varieties. Breakfast Mon-Sat 6-11 am, Sun 8-11 am and lunch 11 am-2:30 pm. No dinner.

LILLIAN'S CARIBBEAN GRILL
Grand Galleria (Tolbod Gade)
☎ (340) 774-7900
Moderate

The Grand Galleria, a historic building near Emancipation Park that was once a hotel, is now a mini-mall. Recent renovations have created attractive boutiques, an art gallery and several restaurants. Lillian's is one of them. It has a small dining room with only a dozen tables, but Lillian shares the inner courtyard with other dining spots. Tables here are umbrella-shaded. Breakfast is served from 7:30 to 9 am and eggs; pancakes and cereal prevail.

Lillian makes the best "dumb bread" in town. It's a thick loaf of freshly baked bread that has been filled with cheddar cheese. It's served cut into triangles and delicious with bush tea or coffee.

Lunch is when Lillian serves typical West Indian food and it is outstanding. The menu changes daily, but you'll always find local fish, conch, mutton, chicken and pork prepared in a variety of ways. Main dishes are served with coconut dumplings, plantains, Johnny cakes, rice and beans and fungi. Desserts are special. Sample the banana fritters or sweet potato pudding. Lunch 11 am-2:30 pm. No dinner. Closed Sun.

Dining Near Red Hook & The East End

Most of St. Thomas' luxury beach resorts and deluxe villa communities are on the island's East End along Route 38 (Smith Bay Road). Lots of restaurants and clubs have gravitated there as well. The American Yacht Harbor complex at Red Hook was another spark. Several restaurants are part of the complex and others are in Red Hook Plaza across the road. There are shops and boutiques in both as well. All the restaurants here are casual. Many stay open late.

If you are driving, you'll appreciate **Route 38**, which is well maintained and even has some lights.

THE FRIGATE EAST
Red Hook Plaza
☎ (340) 775-6124
Moderate
Dinner only

Take a well-aged prime steak, perfectly seasoned and grilled over an open hearth, throw in a well-stocked salad bar, hot bread and butter, add a tall cool drink and the twinkling lights of St. John in the distance and you have a winning combination. The Frigate, relaxed and informal, serves dinner only on an open-air roof-covered terrace on the Plaza's upper level. The menu consists of filet mignon, strip and sirloin steaks, teriyaki chicken and fresh seafood. These are served with baked potato or rice. Desserts vary but include puddings, pastries and ice creams. Dinner 6-10 pm. Bar opens 5:30 pm. Closed Sun.

Frigate East has a **Kid's Menu**.

OFF THE HOOK
Piccolo Marina, Red Hook
☎ (340) 775-6350
Moderate
Dinner only

Stressing good food and friendly service, Off The Hook seems to have a winning formula. It has a romantic open-air dockside setting and its white tables and chairs are set on the boardwalk overlooking Vessup Bay. Fresh fish is delivered daily by local fishermen and seafood dominates the menu. Conch fritters, Thai tuna tartare and Calypso crabcakes are popular openers, but you might prefer the jerk chicken skewers or chilled soup. Main courses include the catch of the day prepared to your taste, local lobster, fish stew in a coconut curry sauce and even barbecued chicken.

There are pasta dishes too. A casual atmosphere, delicious food and the twinkling lights of St. John in the distance. What more can you ask for? Dinner only 6-10 pm. Route 38 (Smith Bay Road) to Red Hook.

PATRICK'S AT COMPASS POINT
Compass Point Marina
☎ (340) 715-3655
Moderate
Dinner only

Compass Point Marina, five minutes from Red Hook (along Route 32) was home to Raffles Restaurant for over 20 years. It recently closed and we were delighted to find a terrific new restaurant in its place. Although the "bungalow on the water" looks the same from the outside, it has been renovated and refurbished. The Asian bamboo, peacock chairs and dark woods have been replaced by light colors and Caribbean art. There are dining areas on different levels and the bar remains a center of interest. Owner/chef Patrick Stevens' menu is witty and the food is delicious, whether you are very hungry or want to eat lightly. Starters include loco chicken tortillas and smoked salmon duet (salmon pate and smoked salmon) with goat cheese and garlic bruschetta. Entrées include beef Wellington, roast duck and sea bass over wild mushroom couscous. Lighter choices include a dozen individual pizzas with scores of toppings and chunky chili served with cheese, onions, beans, spaghetti and even hot dogs. Bistro sandwiches include French dip, buffalo-dipped chicken breast and burgers.

The wine list is impressive. Patrick's partner Dave is the official greeter. He makes everyone feel right at home. Informal, Patrick's is a unique dining experience on the island. Dinner only. 6 am-10 pm. Closed Sun. Parking.

MOLLY MOLONES
American Yacht Harbor, Red Hook
☎ (340) 775-1270
Inexpensive
Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Very popular with yacht crews, Molly Molones "Irish Yacht Pub" is on the waterfront overlooking the Marina. The large circular bar is the center of attention in the inner dining area, while the bulk of the tables are set on a canvas-covered terrace directly on the boardwalk.

Breakfast is the biggest lure here. Molly's McOmlettes include the "St. Thomas" (peppers, onions, ham and cheddar) and the "St. Croix" (mushrooms, tomatoes and Swiss cheese). Other options are eggs benedict, French toast, pancakes, broiled steak n' eggs and the huge Ulster Fry (eggs, sausage, bacon, fried tomatoes and potatoes). The menu also includes a score of breakfast sandwiches.

Traditional Irish specialties such as corned beef and cabbage, shepherd's pie, fish 'n chips and bangers 'n mash are served for lunch and dinner. There are a dozen burgers, deli sandwiches and hot sandwiches available as well. Heartier fare served at dinner includes filet mignon, Danish baby-back ribs and Irish poached salmon.

Breakfast 7-11 am, lunch 11 am-3 pm, dinner 5-11 pm, brunch (Sat & Sun) 7 am-2 pm.



The same people also own **A Whale Of A Tale**, an attractive air-conditioned seafood and pasta restaurant on the second level of the Yacht Harbor. Dinner only, 5-10 pm nightly. Reservations advised. ☎ (340) 775-1270. Expensive.

RESTAURANT AZURE
Sapphire Village, East End
☎ (340) 777-4280
Moderate
Dinner

Azure has both a lovely setting and a unique menu. Set in the condominium complex above Sapphire Resort (make a sharp right when entering the property), it looks out over the resort, the beach and the ocean. Its dinner menu features cuisine of the world's tropics all around the globe. You can start with Cantonese eggrolls and a Thai dipping sauce or grilled garlic shrimp crostini. Lemony chicken piccata, crispy sesame orange duck breasts and Thai green coconut curried shrimp are standouts. Jamaican jerk pork, grouper Martinique and seafood crêpes with habañero sauce are among the Caribbean specialties. Thursday nights are "Thai" nights. There is live music on weekend nights. While not a "hotel" restaurant, Azure is at poolside so its lunch menu is basically burgers and sandwiches. At night, white tablecloths appear and the indirect lighting makes Azure a relaxed oasis with interesting food.

ALEX'S RESTAURANT AT LATITUDE 18
Vessup Point Marina, Red Hook
☎ (340) 774-2495
Inexpensive
Lunch, dinner

Just to prove it's a small world, a funky marina-side eaterie serving Greek and Mediterranean specialties has become one of St. Thomas' most popular stops. The restaurant is very casual, but the kitchen takes its food seriously. Start with the mezze – like tapas or an antipasto, a group of small appetizers. Here the mezze has hummus, baba ganouj and tabouli salad, olives and raw vegetables. Gyro sandwiches, beef shish kebabs, lamb chops, chili and garlic shrimp are also popular. Burgers, pastas and chicken are served as well. The bar is a popular hangout and they have beers on

draught. There is live music on weekends. Alex's draws a young crowd, many of whom work on chartered yachts. Opens at 11 am and closes when the last guest staggers out.

CARIBBEAN SALOON
American Yacht Harbor, Red Hook
☎ (340) 775-7060
Moderate
Lunch, dinner, late night

Few sports bars have a better location than the Caribbean Saloon, on the second floor of this waterside complex. The bar is central to the restaurant and it is always crowded at dusk when the charter crews stop by for Happy Hour and popcorn shrimp, buffalo wings and conch fritters. A café menu is served for lunch and as a late-night menu till 4 am. It includes burgers, cheesesteak hoagies, mahi and po boy shrimp hoagies and meatball and sausage subs. The wooden tables scattered through the dining room are crowded for dinner (from 7 pm) when appetizers include crab cakes, peel n' eat shrimp and soups. Main courses feature BBQ ribs, chicken, stir fry dishes, prime rib, veal parmesan and lobster tails. There are 10 large-screen satellite TVs scattered through the dining room. They are set to sporting events. Casual ambience and attire. Young crowd.

DUFFY'S LOVE SHACK
Red Hook Plaza
☎ (340) 779-2080
Inexpensive
Lunch, dinner, late night

If you are looking for a quiet dining experience, don't head here. Duffy's rocks with "Taco Tuesdays," "Chicks Rule Wednesdays" and a costume party every Thursday night. This thatch-roofed bar has leopard-print seats, palm trees and shutters open to the cooling trade winds. The bartenders prepare exotic concoctions like the "Love Shack Volcano" (it flames), "Revenge of Godzilla" in a green Godzilla glass and "Blast Off" in a glowing spaceship.

The food is good and fun to eat. Try the communal pupu platter where you grill your own skewers. Other openers include jerk chicken, conch eggrolls and tequila-lime shrimp. Heftier items are steaks, tamarind honey ribs and grilled local fish. A late night (10 pm-midnight) menu offers burgers, wings and finger foods. No credit cards.

Dining in Charlotte Amalie & Frenchtown

Frenchtown, which houses several fine dining choices, also has casual dining places and night spots. It's a small area and restaurants have parking areas. Charlotte Amalie's restaurants are busier at lunch than dinner because they are in the heart of the commercial district. Most are closed on Sunday when the shops are closed as well. Several of our selections are on the waterfront where there is parking.

> **Caution:** Avoid walking through the alleys at night when the area is deserted.

FAGIOLI
Waterfront (at Guttet's Gade)
☎ (340) 777-8116
Moderate-expensive
Lunch, dinner

One of Charlotte Amalie's most attractive dining spots, Fagioli sits on the waterfront. You can choose a table in the gated courtyard or relax in the cool brick-walled inner dining room. Wine racks line one wall and ceramic floors add to the Mediterranean flavor. Lunch specials include an assortment of panini sandwiches, lots of salads, pastas, calzone filled with chicken, vegetables and sausage and melted ricotta cheese. For dinner there are many pasta dishes, osso bucco, lamb shank, veal marsala with mushrooms and eggplant parmigiana. Tiramisu is made fresh daily. There is live music on weekends. Closed Sun.

BELLA BLU
24 Honduras, Frenchtown Mall
☎ (340) 774-4349
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

Contemporary Bella Blu's menu and spare décor would look right at home in New York's Soho. A Mediterranean menu has replaced the Austrian specialties of the previous occupant (Alexander's Café), but since Alex still owns the space a few items remain. Blue Corian tabletops, stainless steel chairs and sleek white walls sparkle in the indirect lighting. Local artwork is displayed. The inner dining room is air-conditioned, and there are also a few outdoor tables. Lunch specials are spaghetti and meatballs, honey-fried chicken and fresh fish sandwiches. The dinner menu adds lamb chops, filet mignon and grilled shrimp, plus Austrian dishes like schnitzel and sausages. There's a small bar and a good wine list. Lunch 11 am-4 pm, dinner 5-10:30 pm. Closed Sun.



Bella Blu hosts a monthly **art show**. The work of local artists is on display both inside the restaurant and on the patio, with refreshments.

TUSCAN GRILL
24 A Honduras, Frenchtown
☎ (340) 776-4211
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

Adjacent to Bella Blu and similar in its contemporary décor, Tuscan Grill, an Italian eaterie, is most popular at lunch (11:30 am-4 pm), when well-dressed staff from nearby banks and shops stop in. The two TV sets over the bar are invariably set to a financial channel and ESPN. Singles often eat at the bar. This is a small space and tables are in close quarters so you can check out the homemade pizzas, panzanella (Tuscan bread) salad, calamari fritti and steamed mussels. Dinner entrées include chicken parmesan and veal marsala

plus a variety of pastas. Lunch 11:30 am-5 pm, dinner 5 pm-11 pm. Closed Sun.



Both Italian restaurants in Charlotte Amalie (Virgilios and Fagioli) have larger menus and spaces, but you can park at Tuscan Grill and Frenchtown is bustling at night.

BENI IGUANA'S SUSHI BAR
Grand Galleria (near Emancipation Park)
☎ (340) 774-8744
Inexpensive
Lunch, dinner

Where else but in St. Thomas can you find a Japanese sushi bar in an old Danish courtyard? You can sit at the indoor or outdoor counters or take a table in the newly restored courtyard. There are 20 different kinds of sushi, as well as fresh tuna, salmon and yellowtail sashimi.

Many diners opt for one of the seafood or vegetarian rolls. There are over 30 choices, including spicy crab and red snapper. A popular choice is steamed mussels, served with a creamy sesame sauce called iguana sauce. It is delicious and enough for two. Enjoy a Japanese beer or sake with your food. Open 11 am-11 pm nightly. Closed Sun off-season.

MAFOLIE RESTAURANT
Mafolie Hotel, Estate Mafolie
☎ (340) 774-2790
Expensive
Dinner only

Perched 800 feet above Charlotte Amalie, with a magnificent view of the town and harbor, Mafolie was for years one of St. Thomas' most popular eateries. Closed when the previous edition of this guide went to press, we are delighted to say that it has re-opened with new owners and a new-look menu. The informal atmosphere and friendly staff are carry-overs. With meats, fish, shellfish and vegetarian

dishes, there is something for everyone to enjoy. Starters include sashimi tuna with ginger and soy dipping sauce, blackened scallops and chicken or vegetable spring rolls. You can make your entire meal a delicious seafood salad or crispy chicken salad. Heartier entrées include rack of lamb, chicken marsala and snapper Française. Asian pasta (with vegetables) or vegetable risotto are vegetarian options.

Happy Hour (5-7 pm) is popular because you can watch the sun set over the harbor. Dinner 6-10:30 pm nightly. Take Route 35 north from Charlotte Amalie.

AMALIA CAFÉ
24 Palm Passage
☎ (340) 714-7373
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

You'll smell the mouth-watering aroma of paella even before you see the European-style café surrounded by the upscale boutiques of Palm Passage. Authentic Spanish cuisine is served in small dining rooms with aged stone walls, terracotta tiles and original artwork. There are a dozen tables on the patio, set apart from the shoppers by green plants and a wrought iron fence. Tapas (change daily) are great starters. Fried calamari, garlic shrimp, Spanish sausage and clams in a tangy green sauce are served often. The paella Valenciana and *zarzuela de mariscos* (Spanish seafood stew) are big enough to share. If you don't want rice, try the *salpicon de mariscos* (assorted seafood vinaigrette), which has the same shellfish in broth.

Homemade desserts include crême brulée and caramel flan. Spanish wines and sangria are the most popular drinks. Lunch 11 am-3 pm and dinner 6-11 pm. Closed Sun. Park on the Waterfront near Palm Passage.

THE GREENHOUSE
Waterfront Drive (at Palm Passage)
☎ (340) 774-7998
Inexpensive

Long one of Charlotte Amalie's most popular stops, the Greenhouse has been remodeled and is now a restaurant and a sports bar. There are a score of TV sets mounted in different dining areas. They are often set to major sporting events. Dining areas are on different levels, but all are furnished with multi-colored chairs and tables. The lower level has video games and poker-playing slot machines, while the upper level has the bandstand. You can still enjoy the burgers and pizza, but the menu has been expanded to include popcorn shrimp, buffalo wings and chicken fingers. Jerk chicken salad and shrimp Caesar salad are enough for two. The dinner menu includes peel n' eat shrimp, crab cakes, lobster, filet mignon and wood-roasted chicken. Happy Hour (4:30-7 pm) draws crowds for the 2-for-1 drinks. Live bands, usually reggae, perform weekends starting at 9 pm. The Greenhouse opens at 11 am and the kitchen closes at 10 pm. The bar stays open till 2 am.



The **Hard Rock Café** is next to the Greenhouse. Part of the waterfront complex at International Plaza, the restaurant is on the second floor. Have a drink at the trademark Guitar Bar or on one of the balconies that face the harbor. The memorabilia shop is on the ground floor. The menu is similar to that at the Greenhouse, but without the local color. Open 11 am-2 am daily. ☎ (340) 777-5555.

VIRGILIOS
18 Dronningen's Gade
☎ (340) 776-4920
Moderate
Lunch, dinner

"If its not on the menu, we'll make it for you," says owner Virgilio del Mare. What more can you ask for? An air-conditioned Italian restaurant, Virgilio's is a welcome addition to the downtown dining scene. There are crystal chandeliers, stained-glass windows and Italian music plays softly in the background. Crowded at lunchtime with staff from nearby shops, it is less so at dinner.

The food, prepared in Northern Italian style, is light on thick tomato sauces, but heavy on the garlic. Mozzarella marinara is a delicious appetizer, as are the roast peppers and caponata (eggplant salad). Popular entrées include osso bucco and veal Valdoslova (with asparagus and prosciutto). There are over 40 homemade pasta dishes. A "must" is the special cappuccino made with 11 secret ingredients. Virgilio is always around to greet you and to see that things are just right. Closed Sun.



Although Virgilio's address is Dronningen's Gade (Main Street), it is actually a half-block north (between Main Street and Back Street)

Lunch & Lighter Fare

CAFÉ AMICI
37 Main Street (Riise's Alley)
☎ (340) 776-5670
Moderate
Lunch, dinner in high season

This charming lunch stop is in one of the alleys that are streets in the historic district. Its tables, set on a raised brick

terrace, are roof-covered and surrounded by colorful flower beds. The menu, once primarily Italian, has expanded to include Asian fusion and Caribbean dishes. Cruzan steak salad, Norwegian smoked salmon pasta and seafood risotto are popular, as are the pizzas. Sandwiches include one of flying fish and another with portabello mushrooms and red pepper. Café Amici has a full bar with a good selection of wines. Frozen cocktails too. Lunch 10:30 am-5 pm. Dinner in high season only. Call to check on hours. Closed Sun.

BUMPA'S
Waterfront Drive (at Cardow Walk)
☎ (340) 776-5674
Inexpensive
Breakfast, lunch

Look for Bumpa's on the second floor of a whitewashed waterfront building. Order your food as you enter and take your selection to a table on the front porch. The breakfast menu (served until 11 am) has eggs, French toast, pancakes and waffles. Lighter fare includes muffins, scones and bagels, cream cheese and lox. The lunch menu (served until 5 pm) has omelettes, burgers and a dozen sub sandwiches served hot or cold. There is also hot pastrami and corned beef, seafood or chicken salad and veggie burgers. Hot fudge sundaes hit the spot by late afternoon. Clean and quick. No dinner.

BEANS, BYTES & WEBSITES
Royal Dane Mall
☎ (340) 776-7265
Inexpensive
Lunch

Croissants and computers anyone? Head to St. Thomas' largest cyber-café, which has over a dozen computers in its back room. Croissants, pastries, home-baked cookies, freshly squeezed fruit juices and smoothies, as well as gourmet coffees and teas, are served from a counter in the smaller front room. Sandwiches and soups are served from

12 noon-3 pm only. There are only a few non-computer tables, some of them outside in the mall. Open 7 am-6 pm Mon-Sat, 7 am-1 pm Sun.

Texas Pit BBQ
Waterfront Drive, Charlotte Amalie
Take-out only
Inexpensive

You can't miss the mouth-watering aroma of the barbecued meats that wafts through town from the mobile grills and stands set up on the Charlotte Amalie waterfront and two other locations, weekdays after 4 pm. This new dining choice is the brainchild of Bill Collins, a long-time resident, originally from Austin, Texas. Barbecued ribs, beef brisket and chicken are the meats prepared, but it is Bill's secret sauce that makes them special. Local lore has it that famous chef, James Beard, loved it. Sides include coleslaw, rice and potato salad. Fresh bread too. Great idea for villa renters. No credit cards. ☎ (340) 776-9579. Other locations – Red Hook (Marina Market), Wheatley Center (Near Havensight).

Cold Stone Creamery
American Yacht Harbor
Red Hook
☎ (340) 777-2777

Service is slow in this ice cream shop because decisions are so hard to make. There are dozens of flavors to choose from, made fresh in each store daily. Then there are such mix-ins as brownies, nuts, candies and fruits to decide on. Your selections are then placed on a cold granite stone and creamed together before being placed in a freshly-baked waffle cone or bowl. Should you prefer, you can order an "original," which is a specific concoction. There's cherry lovers cheesecake, mud pie mojo or chocolate devotion. Smoothies and ice cream cakes are sold as well. Open 11 am-10 pm daily. Also at Havensight Mall.

After Dark



No big show biz names, no Vegas-type clubs and no casinos. While not exactly a spot for a hot Ovaltine and early-to-bed routine, St. Thomas is not a great night town. Evening entertainment tends to be low-key, with much of it centering around the hotels and restaurants. Live music during dinner is common at scores of restaurants. It may be a steel band or a calypso one, a guitar, some jazz or reggae, but something is usually happening somewhere. Both the entertainment and locale change nightly so you can match your mood to the music every night. At a handful of restaurants, a DJ or live band appear once the kitchen closes. Entertainment areas, often on the beach or outdoor terraces, are open to the public. For the price of a drink, you can spend the evening listening and dancing to good music.

While steel bands remain very popular, traditional West Indian shows with limbo dancing, fire eaters and mocko jumbi (stilt walkers) are not as common as in years past, but they do still exist, often paired with a Caribbean-style buffet.

There are wine bars and sports bars, as well as pubs where draught beer, darts and pool are lures. Sunset cruises are also an enjoyable option.

St. Thomas has a vibrant cultural life, with concerts, dance recitals and theater. International artists perform at the "Arts Alive" concert series at Tillett Gardens and also at The Reichhold Center for the Arts. Local theater groups are very popular too.

The concierge desk at your hotel will have a listing of what's happening and where. If reservations are needed, they can make them for you. Check *Island Delights*, *The Island Trader* and *St. Thomas This Week*. These are free giveaways found in hotels and shops. *Weekend*, a Thursday insert in the local newspaper, *The Daily News*, is another good source.

Music & Dancing

Popular Hotel Venues

These restaurants are popular spots for listening to music.

The Pirate's Pub & Dungeon Bar, Bluebeard's Castle Hotel, ☎ (340) 774-1600.

Coco Joe's off the Beach Bar, Mariott Frenchman's Reef Hotel, ☎ (340) 776-8500.

The Café at the Ritz Carlton, Ritz Carlton Hotel, ☎ (340) 775-3333.

The Ocean Club, Wyndham Sugar Bay Resort, ☎ (340) 777-7100.

Bonnie's by the Sea, Elysian Beach Resort, ☎ (340) 775-1000.

Restaurant Venues

Fungi's on the Beach, Point Pleasant Resort. An upscale beach shack that serves traditional West Indian cuisine and native drinks. There's live music during dinner and dancing after the kitchen closes. Fungi's has the best reggae band on St. Thomas. ☎ (340) 775-4142.

East End Café, Red Hook. The dinner menu features Italian food and it is quite good. East End is the best place on the island to hear live music. Blues, jazz, reggae and rock bands alternate evenings. ☎ (340) 715-1442.

Tavern on the Waterfront, Charlotte Amalie. When the restaurant shuts down, an upscale night club opens, usually at 10 pm. It has live music or a DJ for dancing. If you like Latin music call to check on when it's played. ☎ (340) 776-4328.

Island Blitz, Contant Hill. Island Blitz is a new entertainment complex housed in a 200-year-old building. Formerly called The Old Mill, it has a stunning setting on a hill overlooking town. There is a courtyard restaurant serving Conti-

nental and Caribbean specialties and its sports and game center is on the roof. Its stone walls date to the 1700s. The main attraction is The Media Sound Stage, an intimate dance club. It's open nightly and has live concerts periodically, ranging from jazz to reggae to hip-hop. ☎ (340) 776-3004 for hours. Check concert schedule at www.islandblitz.com.

Fagioli Restaurant & Lupita Bar, Waterfront, Charlotte Amalie. Fagioli is an excellent Italian restaurant and its sister eaterie/bar serves Mexican food. Jazz groups on Fri and Sat evenings play from 7-10 pm. ☎ (340) 777-8116.

Good Fun

Iggie's Beach Bar, Bolongo Bay. Iggie's is the best beach bar on the island. It draws crowds to watch sports events on its four TV sets, to take part in or cheer those involved in the raucous beach volleyball games or to pitch horseshoes. There's an event each night. Sometimes it's "all you can eat" crab legs or ribs and other times it's fajita Friday or a Caribbean buffet. There's often jazz, guitar or a steel band. It's informal and a fun spot. ☎ (340) 775-1800.

The Toad & Tart English Pub, 105 Smith Bay Road. A warm and friendly place that serves traditional English fare, though many skip the food and spend time at the bar watching sporting events on TV, playing board games and darts. Casual, noisy and fun. Thurs-Sun 5:30-10 pm. ☎ (340) 775-1153.

Duffy's Love Shack, Red Hook Plaza. Duffy's looks like a tennis bubble. It is in the parking lot of this small mall. Imbibers spill out onto the lot to enjoy the drinks and music under the stars. There's an "event" several nights a week and dancing too. No credit cards. ☎ (340) 779-2080.

Betsy's Bar, Frenchtown. A popular watering hole for island fishermen and residents of Frenchtown. There's a light menu, but most guests come for good drinks and good fun. There are pool tables, darts and foosball. Live music on Fri

and Sat from 7-10 pm. Lots of our recommended restaurants are nearby. ☎ (340) 774-9347.

The Green House, Charlotte Amalie. The colorful Green House has expanded its menu and has mounted a score of satellite TVs throughout. They have a bank of poker video machines on a lower level and a bandstand on the upper level. There is live music virtually every night. Dancing too. ☎ (340) 774-7998.

Jack's Wings, Tillet's Gardens. Jack's wings are consistently voted St. Thomas' best. The spicy wings are accompanied by nine different sauces. Happy Hour starts at 5 pm daily. There are mounted TVs often tuned to sporting events and there is live music Thurs through Sat nights. This is adjacent to the Pistarcle Theatre and the Theater in the Garden. ☎ (340) 776-9464.

Bottoms Up, Independent Boat Yard, East End. A casual dockside pub that is actually on a docked wooden boat, Bottoms Up has a popular bar and a handful of tables. It's very popular at breakfast, which lasts till 3 pm, and then again at dinner. British fare is featured, such as curries, fish n' chips and shepherd's pie, plus filet mignon, as well as American specialties like BBQ ribs. The music starts at 6 pm Tues-Sun and Mon night is movie night. Bottoms Up draws a boating crowd. ☎ (340) 775-4817.

Wine Bars & Bistros



Epernay, Frenchtown. St. Thomas' popular wine bar is a chic bistro with subdued lighting, small tables and a romantic ambience. It has champagnes and fine wines by the glass. The dinner menu has expanded and includes sushi, assorted pates and pizzas as well as desserts. There's a small dance floor. Weeknights from 5-11 pm, to midnight on Fri and Sat. Closed Sun. ☎ (340) 774-5348.

Room With A View, Bluebeard's Castle Hotel. This independently owned bistro's glass walls look down on the har-

bor and the town of Charlotte Amalie. The bar opens at 5 pm and closes at 12:30 am. It has an outstanding selection of wines by the glass and a climate-controlled wine room. The menu includes Greek and Italian specialties and famous desserts such as mango flambé and baklava. Closed Sun. ☎ (340) 774-2377.

XO Bistro, Red Hook. A storefront in Red Hook Plaza, XO is not as attractive as those above, but it nevertheless has a devoted clientele. It opens daily at 4 pm (6 pm weekends) for Happy Hour. Pizza, pasta, burgers, wraps and chowders are headliners. Wednesday night is a "wine event" that draws a lot of singles. Live music includes calypso, guitar and vocals. ☎ (340) 779-2069.

Concerts & Theater



Tillett Gardens, Tutu. In 1959, silkscreen artist Jim Tillett arrived in St. Thomas, where he transformed an old Danish farm, in the Tutu area, into a flourishing artist's compound. The center has expanded and flourished, despite Tillett's death. It remains a marketplace for local arts and crafts and hosts the "**Arts Alive**" art fairs several times each year. (See *Shopping*.) The compound now houses an impressive entertainment component and is home to an outdoor theater that can accommodate 300 people. "**Concerts in the Garden**" offers four classical and four non-classical concerts annually. The artists come from all over the world. A pre-concert dinner is served in the garden, but you can purchase tickets for the performance only as well. Adjacent to the garden is the enclosed, air-conditioned **Pistarcle Theater**, a lovely venue that can seat 200 people. Now in its 15th year, it presents a series of shows, as well as a film series. Both the concert series and the theatrical performances are very popular so you should check schedules and reserve seats well in advance. ☎ (340) 775-1929, www.tillettgardens.com for concerts; (340) 775-7877, www.pistarcletheater.vi for Pistarcle Theater.

Reichhold Center for the Arts, Altona, Charlotte Amalie. Now in its 27th year, the Reichhold Center for the Arts, is an open-air amphitheater set in a valley on the campus of the College of the Virgin Islands. The school is located off Route 30, near Brewers Bay. This is the island's premier venue for visiting artists and international performers. Bill Cosby, the Vienna Boy's Choir and Ray Charles are among those who've performed here. Dance companies, concerts and comedy are offered on a regular schedule throughout the year. Once again, the demand is great, so check the schedule and order your tickets well in advance. ☎ (340) 693-1559, www.reichholdcenter.com. The center is near the airport.

West Indian Shows



Spend an evening at a typical West Indian barbecue and show. Sophisticated entertainment it isn't, but you'll have fun, especially if you have children. If you choose to eat elsewhere and come only for the show, you'll be asked to spend a minimum amount. Shows vary, but look for steel bands, limbo dancing, fire eating and broken bottle dancing. Mocko Jumbi troupes perform on stilts, but they are rare at these "Carnival" night shows. Call for show schedules, which vary by the month.

Bolongo Bay Resort, Southside. Alternates between its "Beach House" upscale dining room and Iggie's Beach Bar. ☎ (340) 775-1800.

Emerald Beach Resort, near the Airport. The Palms Restaurant at this resort occasionally has West Indian shows. ☎ (340) 777-8800.

Sunset Cruises

Romantica Excursions. A lovely option is a dinner cruise around Charlotte Amalie's harbor on a multi-level power

boat. The indoor dining area and the observation deck are air-conditioned. The bar and lounges are furnished with comfortable leather chairs and sofas and the crystal chandeliers afford subdued light. Dinner is served at candlelit tables. It consists of five courses, starting with a shrimp cocktail, followed by a Caesar salad and a choice of main course. There is live entertainment. You can dance under the stars as you glide by Water and Hassel Islands. Expect to pay $90 per person. Waterfront Drive (opposite International Plaza). ☎ (340) 775-0027, www.romantica-excursions.com.



St. Thomas A-Z

ATMS/BANKS

First Bank, **Nova Scotia Bank** and **Banco Popular** all have branches on the Waterfront. They have ATMs. First Bank and Nova Scotia Bank also have branches at Havensight Mall and Red Hook. There are ATMs at **Little Switzerland's Internet Café** on Main Street and in **Royal Dane Mall**.

BOOKSTORES

St. Thomas' most complete bookstore is the **Dockside Bookshop** in Havensight Mall. **Hemingway's Bookshop** has used paperbacks. It's in Red Hook Plaza.

CINEMAS

There are multi-screen complexes on the island. One is mid-island at **Four Winds Shopping Center** and another is near **Wheatley Center** and the cruise dock.

COLD TREATS

Shiver Me Timbers, Royal Dane Mall, has 30 flavors of shaved ice – with or without rum.

Stone Cold Creameries, Port of Sale Mall & American Yacht Harbor, carries dozens of ice-cream flavors with mix-ins.

COLLEGE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

A four-year institution, it has a large campus on St. Thomas and another on St. Croix.

DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER
The island has a fully equipped decompression chamber for divers at the hospital in Charlotte Amalie. ☎ (340) 776-8311.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER
Police, Fire, Ambulance, dial 911.

HOSPITAL
Located near Bluebeard's Hill, the hospital has an emergency room and is open 24 hours a day. ☎ (340) 776-8311.

HOSPITALITY CENTER
Located at Tolbod Gade near Emancipation Park, it sells maps, dispenses advice, offers bathrooms and package sitting service. Hours: 8 am-5 pm, weekdays, 9 am-1 pm, Sat. ☎ (340) 774-8784.

MARKETS
Marina Market, Red Hook.
Pueblo Supermarkets, Wheatley Center & Sub-Base.
Gourmet Gallery, Havensight Bldg IV & Crown Bay Marina.
Natural Food Grocery & Deli, Sub-Base.

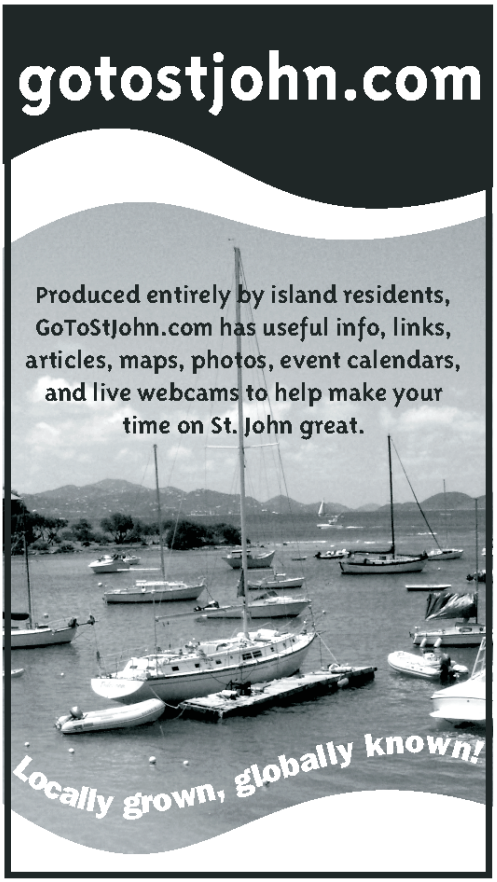
NEWSPAPERS
Local newspapers include ***The Daily News*** and ***The Avis***. They include news and sports from the Associated Press and other sources. You can find the ***New York Times*** and ***Miami Herald*** at hotel sundry shops.

PHARMACIES
Apothecary Hall, Main Street, ☎ (340) 774-5432
Havensight Pharmacy, Havensight Mall Bldg IV, ☎ (340) 776-1235
Sunrise Pharmacy, Red Hook Plaza, ☎ (340) 775-6600

PHOTO LABS
Blazing Photos, Havensight Mall Bldg VII, will process your photos in one hour.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES
Anglican – All Saints Cathedral, Garden Street.
Lutheran – Frederick Lutheran Church, Norre Gade.
Moravian – Memorial Moravian Church, Norre Gade.

Jewish – Historic Synagogue, Crystal Gade.
Catholic – St. Peter's and St. Paul's Cathedral, Main Street; St. Anne's, Frenchtown.
Christian Science – Snegle Gade.
Jehovah's Witness – 134 Altona.
Mormon – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Havensight Mall.


gotostjohn.com
Produced entirely by island residents, GoToStJohn.com has useful info, links, articles, maps, photos, event calendars, and live webcams to help make your time on St. John great.
Locally grown, globally known!

St. John



St. John is unique, a rather overused word to be sure, but apt in this case, for over two-thirds of this beautiful island is part of a US National Park. **The Virgin Islands National Park**, created in 1956 with just under 5,000 acres, has expanded to over 8,000 land acres, plus thousands of offshore acres as well. While this has caused some resentment on the part of entrepreneurs anxious to construct luxury hotels along its stunning beaches, it has been a boon for visitors like us. The park has permitted the island's considerable natural beauty to remain undeveloped.

The sights on St. John are natural ones – coral beaches with top-notch snorkeling in clear waters, acres and acres of forest suitable for hiking, and here and there silent ruins of long ago plantations (some restored) that testify to the island's history.

The Park Service has not merely maintained the status quo. They have developed a wide ranging program to preserve the island and to help visitors explore all aspects of St. John. This includes the marked underwater snorkel trail at **Trunk Bay**, the guided hikes through **Reef Bay**, seashore walks and cultural demonstrations at various points on the island. Evening programs include slide presentations about West Indian culture, marine life and history of the islands.

The National Park is just one of the special things about St. John. Another is the people who live here. St. Johnians, many transplanted from surrounding islands and from mainland USA, are warm and welcoming. They exude pride in their island, its tradition and its sense of neighborhood. Much like an extended family, St. Johnians greet each other warmly and seemingly know every island resident (there are about 5,000). Cars often stop mid-street as neighbors hold long conversations. Hitchhiking is a popular mode of transportation for locals and visitors alike. Just point in the

direction you are heading and almost immediately a car, jeep or Surrey bus will stop for you.

Getting Here

From St. Thomas



The ferry from Red Hook will cast off on the hour for its sprint across Pillsbury Sound, a distance of about three miles. Try for a seat on the open upper deck. The spray may dampen your clothing, but not your spirits as you pass madly waving passengers aboard other ferries, sailboats and catamarans. Twenty minutes later you'll step off in Cruz Bay, a picturesque town filled with craft shops and small eateries.



Fare is $3 one way. ☎ (340) 776-6412 for schedules.

Set aside some time to stroll through the dozen streets and to visit Mongoose Junction, a five-minute walk along North Shore Road.

There is ferry service from Charlotte Amalie as well. The ride takes 45 minutes and is quite scenic. The ferry operates on a two-hour schedule, with the first ferry at 9 am and the last from Cruz Bay at 3:45 pm.



One-way fare is $7. Check current schedules with **Varlack Ventures**, ☎ (340) 776-6412.

At this writing, a car ferry service operates between Red Hook and Cruz Bay. The fee is $35 RT, the ride takes 25 minutes and you need reservations. There are eight daily crossings Mon through Sat, with curtailed service on Sun. Two lines operate the service. Call them to check schedules and reserve your spot. **Boyson Inc.**, ☎ (340) 776-6294, and **Republic Barge**, ☎ (340) 779-4000.

St. John to the BVI

To Tortola

Ferries connect St. John and Tortola's West End. There are three crossings daily. The trip takes 30 minutes. RT fare $35.

To Jost Van Dyke

The ferry from Red Hook stops at Cruz Bay on the way to Jost Van Dyke. At this writing service operates on Fri, Sat and Sun only. The trip from Red Hook takes 45 minutes (25 from Cruz Bay.) RT fare is $40 ($35 from Cruz Bay).

To Virgin Gorda

On Thurs and Sun mornings, the Red Hook Ferry stops at Cruz Bay. There is only one ferry each day. Most visitors will take the Tortola ferry and continue on to Virgin Gorda from Road Town. The trip from Red Hook takes 1 hour and 15 minutes. RT fare is $50.



All the services above are operated by **Inter-Island Boat Services**. ☎ (340) 776-6597 for current schedules. A passport is required to visit the BVI.

Getting Around the Island



Surrey buses and vans act as taxis. A horde of Surrey bus drivers will be on the dock to help you get started. They try to hustle as many passengers as possible. You pay by the seat and by the destination. Rates from one point to another are fixed and are low.

You can arrange to hire the van/bus and its driver for an hour, several hours or the whole day. Arrange the rate before setting out. If you'd like to rent a jeep for the day or week, remember that traffic keeps to the left here as it does on St. Thomas.

St. John
To Tortola
Brown Bay
Great Thatch
The Narrows to Sir Francis Drake Channel
Leinster Bay
Mary Point
Francis Bay
Maho Bay
Whistling Cay
Cinnamon Bay
Trunk Bay
Hawksnest Bay
Caneel Bay
CRUZ BAY
KING HILL ROAD
NORTH SHORE ROAD
CENTERLINE ROAD
Palestina
Coral Bay
Coral Harbor
Hurricane Hole
Hawksnest Bay
Newfound Bay
East End Point
East End Bay
Flanagan Island
Privateer Bay
East End
Round Bay
Long Point
Leduck Island
Lagoon Point
Calabash
Salt Pond Bay
Ram Head
Great Lameshur Bay
Reef Bay
Fish Bay
Rendezvous Bay
Chocolate Hole
Great Cruz Bay
To St. John
Congo Cay
Lovango Cay
Mingo Cay
Grass Cay
Pillsbury Sound
To Red Hook
To Charlotte Amalie
2 MILES
N
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Roads are few and well maintained, but they are narrow and difficult to maneuver. Following old donkey paths, they go sharply uphill and steeply down with breathtaking hairpin turns.



Car & Jeep Rentals

Jeeps are a lot of fun to drive. Agencies are near the dock and in Cruz Bay.

St. John Car Rental . . . . . ☎ (340) 776-6103 (at dock)

Cool Breeze . . . . . ☎ (340) 776-6588

O'Connor Jeep Rentals . . . . ☎ (340) 776-6343 (Centerline Road)

Varlack Auto Rentals . . . . . ☎ (340) 776-6412

Sun & San Car Rental . . . . ☎ (340) 776-6374

To rent a vehicle, you must be 21 years of age and hold a valid driving license. There are only two gas stations on St. John and both are in Cruz Bay.



Head to the VI National Park shop, 1300 Cruz Bay Creek, St. John, ☎ (340) 776-6201, www.vinow.com/stjohn/nationalpark, for the **best driving map**.

Special Events on St. John

St. John Festival



St. John Festival (formerly Carnival) is part of its Independence celebration and commemorates the emancipation of slaves in 1848. Though not officially celebrated until 1928, the roots can be found in plantation times. It was devised by plantation owners who hoped a celebration

would encourage their slaves to work harder. The 30-day festival begins in early June, but major events take place on July 4th and 5th.

Festival Village, constructed along the waterfront, is the site of stalls selling local foods, drinks and handicrafts. There are pony rides and games for children, who are more involved in Carnival here than on St. Thomas.

Residents and visitors dance through the streets to the beat of calypso and reggae bands, which come from all over the Caribbean to take part in the fun. The bands move through town on the back of trucks. The finale is the Festival parade, led by the newly crowned Queen and the traditional mocko jumbie stilt walkers. They are followed by floats, gaily attired bands, singers and dancers, all of whom have designed and created their outfits and songs to fit a central theme. Prizes are awarded and a good time is had by all. Fireworks that evening are the last official event of Festival.

St. John's Blues Festival



Live-music parties and a big open-air show are the main events at St. John's Blues Festival, which started in 2002. Composer and recording artist (and St. Johnian) Steve Simon and some friends noted that music festivals were common on the mainland and other Caribbean islands, but there were none in the USVI. Thus a tradition was begun and has proven very popular. The open-air concert is held at the Coral Bay Ball Field on the last night of the festival. It starts at 7:30 pm and the admission charge is $25. Food and beverages are included. Bring blankets or sand chairs. The three nights prior are set aside for live-music parties held at restaurants in Cruz Bay, Coral Bay and Mongoose Junction. The music typically starts at 8 pm and is free. The money raised goes to "The Safety Zone" an organization that aids women with domestic problems. The festival is scheduled at the end of March. For up-to-date detail, ☎ (340) 693-8120 or e-mail stevesimon@stjohnbluesfestival.com.

Coral Bay Thanksgiving Regatta



On the two days after Thanksgiving a just-for-fun but hard-fought regatta takes place in the waters near Coral Bay. Entrants include great racers, Sunday sailors, locals who live aboard boats and hardly pull-up their anchors, and lots of tourists.

Headquarters is Skinny Legs Bar and Restaurant, ☎ (340) 779-4982; www.skinnylegs.com.

A Capsule History



At the end of the 17th century, squatters from St. Thomas and nearby Tortola (British) began settling on St. John and frequent skirmishes erupted between them. Finally, in 1717, King Christian V granted a charter to the **Danish West India Company** for the purpose of establishing a permanent Danish colony on the island. The English on Tortola decided not to fight for the island and so the Danes worked at establishing their settlement. They carved out plantations and, to lure newcomers, offered large tax exemptions. Tobacco, sugar and cotton were soon being exported to Europe. In 1733, the population of St. John stood at 208 whites and 1,000 slaves. Prosperity was short-lived, however, as a slave revolt erupted on the island. The spark that ignited the revolt was a hurricane in the summer of 1733. It destroyed the slave's personal food crops. When refused food by the planters, anger exploded. They set out to kill as many of the hated masters as they could and to burn down the "great houses" and cane fields.

The uprising could not be put down and for six months the slaves were in control of St. John. When control was finally re-established, almost half the plantations were destroyed. Those planters who returned to the island rebuilt their homes. Then Denmark fought with Napoleon against Eng-

land. British troops from Tortola took advantage of the situation by attacking and capturing St. Thomas and St. John in 1807, holding them for seven years.

When the slaves were freed in 1848, the cultivation of sugar cane become unprofitable and most of the planters left. The few natives that remained on St. John existed by farming, fishing and raising livestock.

Caneel Bay, originally a Sugar Mill, was purchased by Laurence Rockefeller, who donated it to the **Jackson Hole Preserve**, a conservation organization. At that time, St. John had about 800 residents and no electricity or cars. Jackson Hole proceeded to buy up over 5,000 acres along St. John's north shore. The locals were dismayed at the tremendous changes occurring on the island. In 1956, Jackson Hole donated the land (not Caneel Bay however) to the Federal Government, and a National Park was created. The park has permitted the natural beauty, wildlife and incomparable beaches to remain unspoiled.

The population of St. John has grown to almost 5,000 and although some resentment lingers, the locals have grown to appreciate the park in their midst.



Many St. Johnians were born in Tortola, BVI and in the Dominican Republic.

Orientation



The island's most-visited points of interest lie along the **North Shore** from Cruz Bay to the Annaberg Sugar Mill Ruins, all within the boundaries of the National Park. The South Shore is just as beautiful, although drier and less developed. When you get off the ferry, drop into one of the souvenir shops alongside the dock and pick up the **St. John Map**, a delightful tongue-in-cheek rendition of St. John drawn by Linda

Smith-Palmer, whose shop is located in Mongoose Junction. The St. John map is free.

To orient yourself quickly, there are some key locations you should know.

Cruz Bay

Cruz Bay is the capital of St. John and the hub of the island. All commercial activity takes place within its dozen streets. Restaurants, guest houses, craft shops, a bank, a convenience market and the only two gas stations on the island are here as well.

National Park Cruz Bay Visitor Center

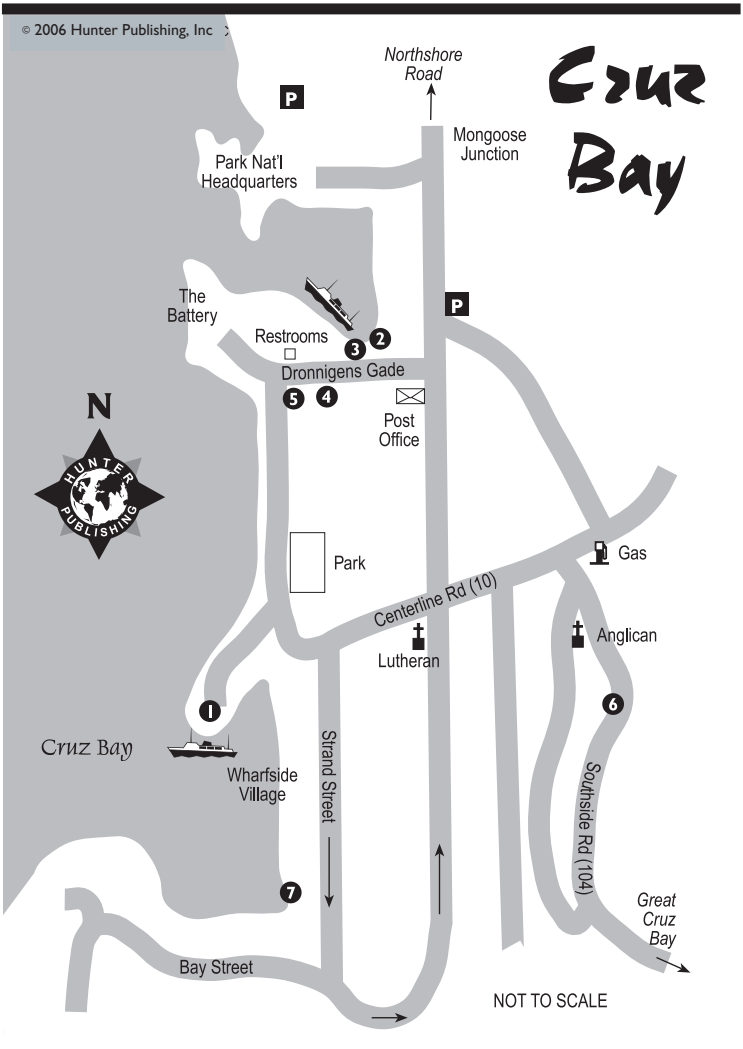
The information center and dock are located between Cruz Bay and Mongoose Junction. Stop by to pick up information about programs. There is also a gift shop and bookstore. A ranger is on duty 8 am-4:30 pm daily.

Mongoose Junction

A five-minute walk from the ferry dock, Mongoose Junction is an interesting shopping center. Lots of craft shops, a good dive shop and restaurants.

Caneel Bay Resort

Caneel Bay was the first resort built by Laurence Rockefeller. In 1955 he purchased the old Caneel Bay Plantation, a resort that had fallen into disrepair. The present-day resort, with seven beaches, three restaurants and magnificently manicured grounds, is one of the finest in the Caribbean and is the core of St. John's social scene.



1. Red Hook/Charlotte Amalie ferry
2. Virgin Gorda/Tortola ferry
3. US Customs & Immigration
4. Tourist Information
5. De Castro Clinic
6. Sprauve Library & Museum of Cultural Arts

Trunk Bay

On an island with memorable beaches, Trunk Bay is the loveliest. Part of the National Park, it has a marked underwater snorkel trail which you can easily follow. This is a must.

Cinnamon Bay

The National Park Service maintains a campsite on this bay which has a lovely beach. There is a commissary and restaurant.

Maho Bay

This unusual community of permanent tent campers is an ecologically sound environment. Although it is within the grounds of the National Park, it is privately run.

Annaberg Sugar Mill

A visit to this restored sugar mill explains a lot about the economy of the island in colonial times. A pamphlet gives details about the site.

Coral Bay

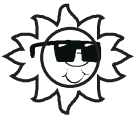
On the island's drier eastern end, Coral Bay was the island's original settlement. Only eight miles from Cruz Bay (along Route 10), the trip takes 25 minutes due to the mountain range. Once a laid-back sleepy town, Coral Bay is experiencing a "boomlet." There are new dining spots, new shops and even some nightlife. All of them remain very casual.

Bordeaux Mountain

Bordeaux Mountain is the highest peak on St. John. It rises to 1,277 feet where there is an overlook. The spectacular

view includes Cruz Bay, the British Virgin Islands and a beautiful blue sea.

Sunup to Sundown



Beach-hopping from one coral sand beach to another is a popular and pleasant activity on an island of 20 square miles and with at least that many beaches. Nude bathing is popular at several of the quieter beaches, but is frowned upon within the National Park. Watersports dominate the daytime hours, with swimming, fabulous snorkeling, scuba diving, windsurfing and sailing all readily available. The hikes and demonstrations conducted by the Park Rangers are well attended and you should try to sign up for some that interest you.

The key to exploring St. John is the Park Service. Their information desk is on the **National Park Dock**, between Cruz Bay and Mongoose Junction. Staff here is always helpful and, best of all, extremely knowledgeable. You might also consider taking a water taxi to nearby Tortola and Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands, or the ferry to St. Thomas for a day of shopping.

The Best Beaches



The island's finest beaches are along the north shore, so we'll explore those first, starting closest to Cruz Bay and moving eastward. All the beaches mentioned are within the borders of the National Park. Surrey buses from Cruz Bay follow this route and you can easily move from one beach to the next.

North Shore Beaches

Solomon Bay

Solomon Beach, the closest northside beach to Cruz Bay, is not easily accessible and therefore is rarely crowded. Access is from Lind Point Trail, which you can pick up near the National Park Service Headquarters (it's under a mile) or at Caneel Bay Resort. The trail from town is well maintained and not too steep. The beach has white sand, and some good snorkeling at the eastern end where it adjoins Honeymoon Beach (in Caneel Bay Resort). There are no facilities, so bring lunch. You'll see nude bathers here. Although it is actually illegal, many people do it.

Caneel Bay

The seven beaches on Caneel Bay are all within the confines of the exclusive resort hotel. The farthest west is **Honeymoon Beach**, which is quite secluded, and the farthest east is **Scott Beach**, which fronts Turtle Bay Estate House, a gourmet restaurant.

While the seven beaches are technically open to the public, six of them are accessible only by boat. The main stretch of beach is accessible to non-guests through the gate at the entrance. Register with the guard. It has good food options, but no rentals.

Hawksnest Bay

There are four small beaches on this bay, which is noted for its very clear light blue water and calm surface. The Alan Alda film, *The Four Seasons*, was filmed at **Great Hawksnest**, the bay's largest sand strip. There are bathrooms, changing facilities and picnic tables. Bring your own food and drink. No rentals. Hawksnest is popular with private yachts.

Jumbie Bay

There is a tiny parking lot at roadside and a wooden staircase leading down to this small beach which has good snor-

keling along a shallow reef and some underwater cliffs. The beach has no facilities and is rarely crowded, so nude bathing is a possibility.

This beach is supposed to be haunted by the ghosts of the many slaves killed here by the evil plantation owner. Jumbie is the West Indian word for ghost.



Take a Surrey bus to Jumbie Bay because the lot holds only six cars.

Trunk Bay

Fifteen minutes from Cruz Bay, Trunk Bay is the premier beach on an island with spectacular beaches. You'll find a wide swath of white coral sand, crystal-clear blue-green water and a scenic view of small islets and cays (some British) in the distance. A 200-meter/640-foot self-guided underwater snorkeling trail (a loop) has been laid out at the western end of the beach. Trunk Bay is a mecca for tour bus passengers who often crowd the beach for short periods of time. There are showers, changing facilities, snack bar, rental equipment for snorkeling, lifeguards. Small entrance fee.

Cinnamon Bay

Cinnamon Bay is the site of the National Park campground, which has tents, cottages and bare sites. It is the one place in the park where you are permitted to camp, but only with prior reservations (see *Best Places to Stay*). The long, wide beach here is darker in color and has thicker grains of sand than most others. The thick roots of trees stud the beach, as does lots of driftwood (great if you are creative). There are showers, changing facilities and a snack bar/commissary. Surfers flock here in winter.

The watersports center is the most complete on the island. Equipment is rented and scuba tours, day-sailing trips and other water activities are organized here. There are lifeguards.



There is a self-guided trail and Danish ruins across the road. Details in *Sightseeing*, page 183.

Maho Bay

There are three distinct beach strips on this bay, which fronts the Maho Bay Campground (see *Best Places to Stay*). If you'd like to try windsurfing (boardsailing), this is the best spot on the island. Maho Bay Camp rents windsurfers and novices can sign up for lessons. The road here is poorly paved.

Francis Bay

Undeveloped and underutilized, Francis Bay has a lovely beach and the snorkeling off **Mary Point** (eastern edge of beach) is excellent since the reef is in pristine condition. Many slaves jumped to their deaths from Mary Point. This is one of the longest beaches on St. John and the trail winds around a salt pond that is a natural habitat for many species of birds. There are no changing facilities or lifeguards, but there are picnic tables and bathrooms.

Leinster Bay

Mangrove-covered Leinster Bay, below the Annaberg Sugar Mill, is a pebble beach where shells and coral are washed ashore. It is not uncommon to see feral donkeys peeking through the branches. Spectacular snorkeling is possible near **Watermelon Cay** at the far end of the beach. There are often starfish in the waters off the cay.

Haulover Bay

Rather than sail all the way around the East End of the island, fishermen plying the rough seas at the island's northeast end, "hauled their boats over" this narrow strip of land to calmer Round Bay and into Coral Harbor – hence the name. There is excellent snorkeling at Cobble Beach and boardsurfing if the weather conditions are right.

South Shore Beaches

The southern shore of St. John is not as scenically beautiful as the north, but it is visually more interesting. The beaches

here are within the National Park and are kick-off (or final) points for hikes through the interior. The ruins of a plantation estate house and the last steam-powered sugar mill on St. John are located here. Roads are not paved, so you'll need a four-wheel-drive vehicle, or you can hike.

Great Cruz Bay

A five-minute drive (or 30-minute hike) from Cruz Bay, Great Cruz Bay fronts the **Westin Resort and Villas**, a sprawling resort. The beach has thick white sand, palm trees and umbrellas for shade, plus lots of dining and imbibing options. There is a fee for using lounge chairs and watersports gear. Good dining options.

Salt Pond Bay & Lameshur Bay

These are the best beaches on this side of the island. Both have good swimming and snorkeling. A trail from Salt Pond Bay leads to **Drunk Bay** and **Ram Head** and it is worth the effort. Lameshur has a picnic area, toilets and a ranger station. **Reef Bay**, near the sugar mill ruins and petroglyphs, is the last beach within this portion of the park.

Snorkeling Near Shore

Serious snorkelers should join a daysail. The operators are well organized, know the prime snorkeling spots and provide gear. (See *Organized Water Sports.*) Less serious snorkelers can head to any of the previously noted beaches. You'll have to bring your own snorkel gear except at Cinnamon Bay, Trunk Bay and Maho Bay.

Virgin Islands National Park

The Virgin Islands National Park, donated by Laurence Rockefeller in 1956, covers approximately two-thirds of St. John. In 1962 the park's boundaries were enlarged to include over 5,000 underwater acres, named the Virgin Islands Coral Reef Monument. Within the park's boundaries you'll find beaches, sheltered coves, coral reefs abundant

with colorful fish, and diverse forest areas ranging from moist sub-tropical woods to semi-arid cactus scrublands. Over 800 species of trees, shrubs, flowers and plants and more than 30 species of tropical birds call the park home. Along its 20 miles of trails are historical remains from the Amerindian civilization, Danish plantation era and of African slavery days.

Activities include bird-watching, boating, camping, fishing, kayaking, scuba diving and snorkeling. But the park is best known for its well-organized program of hikes, tours, demonstrations and cultural activities. Most require pre-registration, which can be made at the Park office in Cruz Bay or at the lifeguard station in Cinnamon Bay. Most of the programs are offered several times weekly. The hikes and tours change on a seasonal basis. The exact hikes discussed here may not be available when you visit, but rest assured the trips offered will be exceptional. Some require a fee.

The Visitor's Center (along the waterfront between Cruz Bay and Mongoose Junction) is open daily (except Christmas Day) from 8 am-4 pm. ☎ (340) 776-6201.

If you prefer to hike on your own, the Park Service will supply you with helpful literature and maps. There are 24 marked hiking trails. Some are well maintained while others are brushy and overgrown. Many are old plantation roads that explore both shores of the island. The Park's pamphlet, *Trail Guide for Safe Hiking*, available free of charge at the Park Office, details them all for you. Use it and other free literature to plan your activities. All include specific safety information. Don't just go off on your own – it's a big forest out there.

Recommended Hikes



The most popular hike guided by Park Rangers is the **Reef Bay Trail**. The downhill trail is part of an old Danish road built in the mid-18th century. At the start the vegetation is sub-tropical with an abundance of flowering shrubs and mango, lime

and kapok trees. It passes ruins of **Par Force**, an old estate, and then, at about the midpoint, leads off to a waterfall and the mysterious **petroglyphs**. No one has been able to determine the origin of these strange rock carvings. Prehistoric Indians? Runaway slaves? Your guess is as good as any.

As you continue along the trail, notice the change in vegetation. The island's south shore is much drier. **Reef Bay Estate**, one of the island's best-preserved Great Houses, is at the two-mile point. You can wander the grounds, but the Main Building is closed. At the end of the trail are the ruins of the **Reef Bay Sugar Mill**, built in 1830, but modernized in 1860 to accommodate steam power. Its equipment is amazingly well preserved. A boat will pick you up for the return trip to Cruz Bay. Reservations are required for the Reef Bay Trail.



Pack a **hat**, **sunscreen** and **bug spray** for all hikes.

You might enjoy the far less strenuous **Seashore Walk**, lasting about 1½ hours. You walk n' wade along a rocky coral-strewn beach exploring coral flats and a mangrove lagoon area, observing its numerous shallow-water marine animals.

You can also explore the underwater acres of the National Park by joining the guided two-hour snorkel trip at Cinnamon Bay. Even children and beginners can follow the marked underwater trail at Trunk Bay. The markers describe life on the coral reef. Snorkel gear rentals are available at both beaches, as are lifeguards and changing areas.



Get a monthly schedule of **programs** and **visitor activities** for the month of your planned visit. www.nps.gov/viis or ☎ (340) 776-6201.

MONGOOSES

There are no poisonous snakes on St. John. The mongooses imported to kill rats feeding on sugar cane, have taken care of that problem. Since the mongooses have no natural enemies on the island (no cobras), they have multiplied and are frequently observed darting across the road.



Do not pick, pick up or eat small green apples which grow on **machineel trees** throughout the islands. These apples and even the tree's sap are extremely poisonous. Locals refer to them as "death apples."

Organized Watersports

Scuba



The Cinnamon Bay Water Sports Center may be the best on the island. You can rent snorkel gear and join their "Round St. John" snorkeling tour. The National Park Service offers a two-hour snorkel tour twice weekly. Sign up here. Bring your own gear. Scuba diving is well organized and both introductory and PADI certification courses are given. Windsurfing boards can be rented. ☎ (340) 776-6330.

Low Key Watersports at Wharfside Village is another good choice. It is a PADI Five-Star training center and offers beginner and refresher dives. Competent snorkelers can join trips to uninhabited cays and protected reefs, while certified divers can explore the wreck of *The Rhône*, used in the film *The Deep*. They can arrange sportfishing trips and gear rentals. ☎ (340) 693-8999, www.divelowkey.com.

Cruz Bay Watersports is another reliable operator. It is a PADI and Naui training center and offers daily reef and

wreck dives as well as beginning scuba courses. There are snorkel trips each afternoon and a full-day snorkel trip to Jost Van Dyke (BVI). Their main office is at The Lumberyard in Cruz Bay. ☎ (340) 776-6234. Another office is at The Westin Resort, ☎ (340 693-8000 ext 1834, www.divestjohn.com.

Hurricane Alley is a lovely shop in Mongoose Junction that sells beach wear, towels, straw hats and sandals and is also a day-sail operator. You can rent snorkel gear and join a snorkel trip or day-sail adventure here. They also arrange scuba trips with Caneel Bay Resort's scuba center. ☎ (340) 776-6256.

St. John Snuba: Snuba or sea trekking combines aspects of scuba diving and snorkeling. Participants wear sea trekking helmets that provide air and allow communication with the guide while keeping heads dry. It lets you see the reef and the fish. Minimum age is eight. Reservations are required. Group meets at Trunk Bay. ☎ (340) 693-8093, www.visnuba.com.

Based at Caneel Bay Resort, **Snorkelmania** offers half-day snorkel trips led by marine naturalists who swim with you and help you identify fish, coral and other marine life. Six-person maximum. Trips leave from Caneel Bay Dock at 10 am and 1 pm, Mon-Sat. The trip takes two hours. Reservations are required. ☎ (340) 776-6111 ext 7218.



Your own snorkel gear is required at Snorkelmania.

Day Charters

Sail Adventurer & Calypso: Join a National Park Ranger-guided snorkel tour through the park's reefs and bays on one of St. John's newest and largest catamarans. Other trips include day-sails to Jost Van Dyke (BVI) and other nearby cays and islands. There are also sunset sails.

Half- and full-day trips are offered. All trips leave from the Westin Resort. ☎ (340) 693-8000 ext 1832, www.adventurervi.com.

Breakaway: Board this 55-foot power yacht and visit Virgin Gorda (BVI) where you can explore The Baths and the caves of Norman Island. Other trips visit Jost Van Dyke. Snorkel gear is provided, as is lunch. Itineraries vary daily. Passport required. The Activities Information Center at Mongoose Junction is headquarters for *Breakaway*. ☎ (340) 474-3733, www.bestofusvi.com.

Alcyone: Bob and Anna Nose have sailed these waters for over 25 years. The *Alcyone* is wide and roomy so it is great for a family. You can sail, snorkel or fish. ☎ (340) 779-4824, www.bobnose.com.

Kayak Tours



Arawak Expeditions has half-day trips lasting three hours or a full-day adventure with lunch. They start with a quick lesson in kayak basics and then paddle to uninhabited Henley Cay for snorkeling. Kayak rentals too. ☎ (340) 693-8312; www.arawakexp.com.

Fishing



Take a half-day, three-quarter-day or full-day trip trolling for marlin, tuna, wahoo and barracuda or go fly-fishing. Tackle, bait and beverages are provided.

Bite-Me Charters, ☎ (340) 693-5823, www.bitemechartersvi.com

Gone Ketchin', ☎ (340) 714-1175, www.goneketchin.com

Boat Rentals



Ocean Runner: Rent your own power boat right in Cruz Bay. Use it to explore nearby islands, snorkel at pristine cays or to go fishing. Ocean

Runner rents 22- , 25- and 28-foot Mako powerboats. Water skis are available. ☎ (340) 693-8809.

Crabby's Watersports: Crabby's on the waterfront in Coral Bay rents dinghies, kayaks and snorkel gear. They also rent coolers, snorkel vests and water floats. ☎ (340) 714-2415.

Noah's Little Arks: Noah rents dinghies from the beach-front Wharfside Village. ☎ (340) 693-3030.

Windsurfing

You can rent a windsurfer at the **Cinnamon Bay Campground**. They give lessons as well. ☎ (340) 776-6330.

Parasailing

Caribbean Watersports offers parasailing, hang gliding and parachuting at different beach areas on St. John. ☎ (340) 775-9360, www.viwatersports.com.

Land-Based Activities

Trail Rides

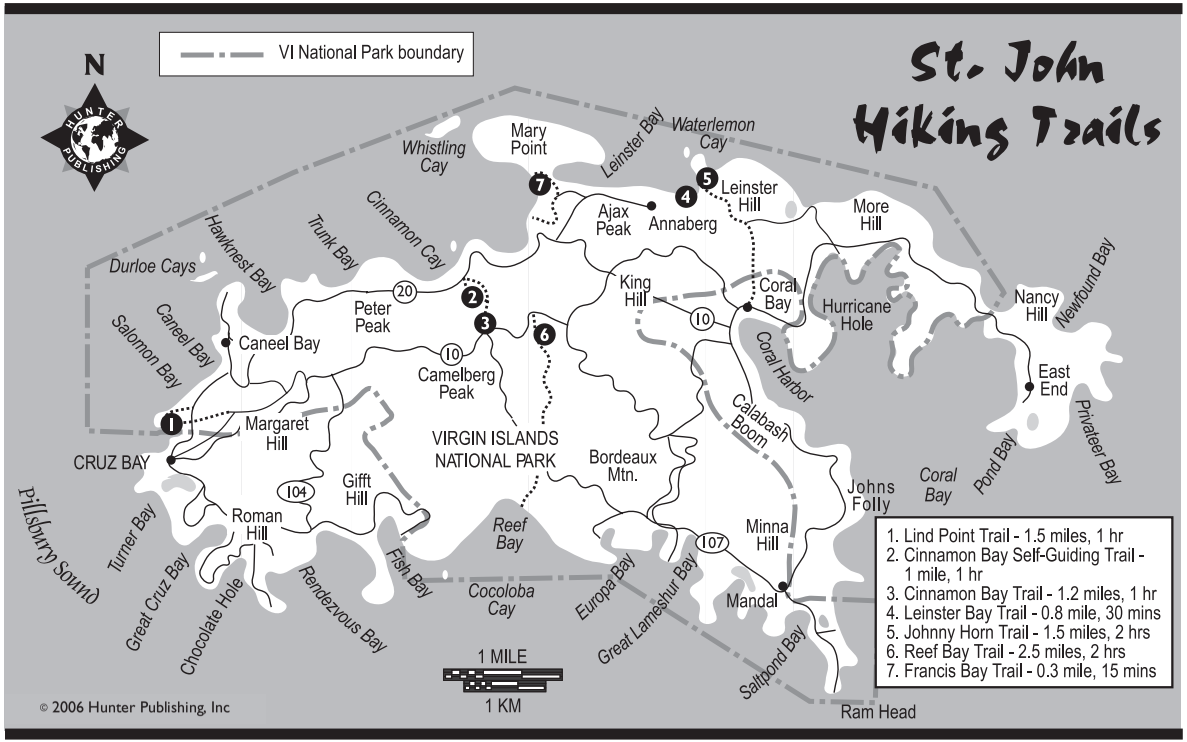


Carolina Corral near Coral Bay has a full program of horse or donkey rides. Rides last one hour and follow trails over the hills to see wild goats and an abundance of flowering plants. Full-moon rides too. Led by experienced guides. ☎ (340) 693-5778, www.st-john.com/trailrides.

Bike Tours



Arawak Expeditions has half-day or full-day rides through the beautiful bays and historic ruins of St. John. Guides explain the flora and fauna. Bring a bathing suit and camera. Full-day trips include a picnic lunch. www.arawakexp.com.


St. John Hiking Trails
N
VI National Park boundary
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Whistling Cay
Mary Point
Leinster Bay
Waterlemon Cay
Leinster Hill
Ajax Peak
Annaberg
More Hill
Hawksnest Bay
Trunk Bay
Cinnamon Cay
Durloe Cays
King Hill
Coral Bay
Hurricane Hole
Nancy Hill
Newfound Bay
Peter Peak
Caneel Bay
Salomon Bay
Camelberg Peak
Coral Harbor
East End
Privateer Bay
Margaret Hill
CRUZ BAY
VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK
Bordeaux Mtn.
Calabash Boom
Johns Folly
Coral Bay
Pond Bay
Pillsbury Sound
Turner Bay
Gifft Hill
Roman Hill
Reef Bay
Minna Hill
Great Cruz Bay
Chocolate Hole
Rendezvous Bay
Fish Bay
Cocoloba Cay
Europa Bay
Great Lameshur Bay
Mandal
Saltpond Bay
Ram Head
1 MILE
1 KM
© 2006 Hunter Publishing, Inc
1. Lind Point Trail - 1.5 miles, 1 hr
2. Cinnamon Bay Self-Guiding Trail - 1 mile, 1 hr
3. Cinnamon Bay Trail - 1.2 miles, 1 hr
4. Leinster Bay Trail - 0.8 mile, 30 mins
5. Johnny Horn Trail - 1.5 miles, 2 hrs
6. Reef Bay Trail - 2.5 miles, 2 hrs
7. Francis Bay Trail - 0.3 mile, 15 mins

Hiking/Snorkeling Trips



Hike St. John offers combination hikes and snorkel trips led by naturalists. There are half-day and full-day excursions that vary in difficulty. Every day but Saturday. Call Cynthia Smith at ☎ (340) 776-6216, www.hikestjohn.com.

Tennis



The Westin Resort's tennis program is managed by Peter Burwash International. There are six artificial grass courts open daily from 7 am-10 pm. ☎ (340) 693-8000 ext 1740. There are public courts near the fire station on Centerline Road, Cruz Bay. They are lit till 10 pm. First come, first served. Free.

Golf



Pastory Gardens, one mile from the Cruz Bay Ferry Dock, is a new entertainment center that is home to "Cruz Bay Golf," an 18-hole miniature golf course. It has 40- to 60-foot putting greens that are fun for children as well as adults. Tournaments are scheduled throughout the year. Here too is a Virtual Reality Golf experience where you can simulate play at any one of 38 top PGA courses such as Pebble Beach and St. Andrews. There is a lovely restaurant and botanical gardens. (See *Sightseeing*.) ☎ (340) 777-3147, www.cruzbaygolf.com.

Sightseeing

Annaberg Sugar Mill Ruins



These ruins can be easily explored using the detailed guide available at the parking lot. All the buildings of the partially restored plantation are numbered to correspond to your guide. Leave yourself at least 30 minutes to complete the quarter-mile circular route.

On early maps of St. John, Annaberg appears as one of the first sugar factories. Molasses and rum were also produced. Freedom for West Indian slaves in 1848 made these industries economically unfeasible and the plantations were divided into subsistence farms which gave St. John its pastoral way of life.

The slave village lies at the foot of the hill, not far from the parking lot. It consisted of 16 cabins, a small oven and gardens where slaves grew fruit and vegetables.

As you walk up the hill you'll have to imagine the area as it was then – covered by tall canes of sugar, resembling bamboo. The slaves had to cut the cane, remove the leaves and, after tying it in bundles, load the cane onto a mule, which carted it to the mill. Most of the mill, whose walls are made of stone and brine coral, still stands, although the upper wooden portion that carried the sails is gone. From this point, look out across Leinster Bay to Tortola, only four miles away. The promenade to your left is **Mary Point**, where several hundred slaves jumped to their deaths during the slave revolt. Local lore has it that the water here turns red each May.

Below the mill, you'll see a circle of stone. It's the outline of the horse mill where mules, oxen or horses harnessed to poles moved iron rollers which crushed the cane. The horse mill was used when there wasn't sufficient wind. Each night, slaves boiled water to wash these rollers since the juice adhering to them would sour and spoil the next day's batch. The Boiling Bench, where the cane juice was boiled, still has a copper kettle. Nothing was wasted. They used the drippings from the sugar juice to produce rum.

The Annaberg grounds are quite lovely, with frangipani, sugar apples and lime trees. Well worth a visit.

The National Park Service offers a series of cultural events here.

Cinnamon Bay

Site of the National Park campsite, Cinnamon Bay was named for the trees that once grew here. There is a one-mile, self-guided trail which you can follow. Start across the road from the main entrance. This area was home to two tribes of Pre-Columbian Indians – the peaceful Arawaks and the cannibalistic Caribs. The big treat at Carib ceremonial dinners was an Arawak child for the main course. Many artifacts discovered here when the camp was being built are on display in the Park Office in Cruz Bay. A short way up the trail on your right is the estate house and, near it, a tree that produces a large green calabash, a fruit eaten by slaves. The house was made of stone, but unfortunately was nearly destroyed in a hurricane. The mill and a bay rum still are not far away. Along the trail, are charcoal pits used during the time when charcoal was burned as fuel. Beyond the dry river bed, you'll come to an old Danish cemetery with all sorts of grave stones. The size of the stone denotes the deceased's social class. Butterflies, birds, spiders, hermit crabs, mamee apple, hog plum and lime trees, as well as bay leaves, all live and grow along this trail.

Coral Bay

Coral Bay, the "other town" on St. John, was actually the site of the original Danish settlement. One of the places to visit here is the ruins of **Fort Berg**, which are atop a hill above the harbor. It was captured and held by slaves during the bloody 18th-century revolt. The **Moravian Church**, a large yellow building you'll see as you enter town, is built over the ruins of an old estate house. The owners of the estate were murdered during the revolt and because of this the church is "haunted" by a jumbie, a West Indian ghost.

The town itself is fun to explore. It makes Cruz Bay look frenetic. There are a few shops and restaurants and lots of yachts and sailboats. It's a popular hangout for crews of day sailboats.



Bring **water** and wear a **hat**.

Salt Pond Bay

As you leave Coral Bay, turn left at the junction to follow the road along the coast. The smell of the sea is very strong here and, although this side of the island is quite arid, there are mangrove trees lining the road. The first settlement you'll pass is **Calabash Brown** and then you'll see the parking area for **Salt Pond Bay** (about 3½ miles from Coral Bay). The trail to the beach is easy to follow and in 10 minutes you'll find yourself on Salt Pond Bay, where you can snorkel or swim.

Following a trail from the southern end of the beach you can head to **Drunk Bay**, a 15-minute walk. This trail passes a salt pond that was used in colonial times and local residents still harvest salt there for their personal use. Drunk Bay Beach, a rocky beach often swept by strong winds, is covered by pieces of coral and thick vines. It is not safe to swim here, but it certainly is interesting to see – it looks like another planet.

Retrace your steps and follow the trail toward the sea, which leads to **Ram Head**. This trail is lined with century plants and unusual barrel cactus called Turk's heads. The beach here is rocky and covered by blue stones. Beyond it is Ram Head, the oldest rock on the island (it dates from the Lower Cretaceous period about 90 million years ago). It stands atop a cliff 200 ft. above the sea. Covered with cactus, it is very steep, so keep far from the edge. The goats and burros wandering here are far more sure-footed than you. The entire walk should take 1½ hours.



Lock your car and take any valuables with you.

A Hike to Bordeaux Mountain



Bordeaux Mountain, at 1,250 ft., is the highest point on St. John. You can hike to the peak, from which you have a great view of Coral Bay and Norman Island, British Virgin Islands.

The **Bordeaux Mountain Trail** leads from Lameshur Bay Beach to the peak. This is a steep trail, heading almost straight up, rising over 1,000 ft. in just over one mile. The trail was used by planters who grew bay leaves on the mountain sides. They packed the leaves on donkeys and led them along this trail to a still on Lameshur Beach, where the bay oil was extracted for use in making cologne. You can also hike to the peak by driving to **Bordeaux Mountain Road**, which is five miles from Cruz Bay along Centerline Road. Leave your car at the small crafts shop and restaurant at the scenic stop. Bordeaux Mountain Road leads to Coral Bay.



This is the steepest road I have ever seen. Use extreme caution and don't even think about it unless you are an experienced four-wheel driver.

Pastory Gardens

A new entertainment complex one mile from Cruz Bay along Centerline Road, Pastory Gardens is home to a lovely restaurant, a botanical garden, an executive golf course and a butterfly conservatory.

The **Compass Rose Restaurant and Bar**, at the heart of the complex, offers good food, great martinis and stunning views of the sun setting over Pillsbury Sound. Lunch is served from 11 am-5 pm with dinner starting at 5 and ending at 10 pm, when the late-night menu kicks in till midnight. Concerts and live bands are scheduled on an irregular basis.

The golf course (see page 182) is set amid the botanical gardens where the **butterfly conservatory** is located. There are 36 species on St. John and when completed there will be between 300-500 butterflies in the conservatory.

If you have a car, there is adequate parking. You can hop a Surrey bus as well. ☎ (340) 777-3147, www.pastory-gardens.com.

Shop Till You Drop



Cruz Bay has a small but thriving artists' colony, with new arrivals constantly adding to the diversity of the crafts. It is primarily composed of artisans from the US, who operate out of miniature shops scattered through Cruz Bay and jumbled together in Mongoose Junction. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the quality of work and the variety of skills on this tiny island. Your best bet is to stroll around town and peek into the small shops – they close and are replaced frequently. You're sure to stumble on something you like.

Cruz Bay

Moving headlong into the modern shopping era, Cruz Bay has built a shopping center. **Wharfside Village**, which is less than a block from the ferry dock, is a pastel-painted bi-level arcade with boutiques, watersports centers and several small eateries. Adjacent to Wharfside are the shops of **The Galleria**. The shops sell resortwear, jewelry, creative gifts, artwork and crafts. **Cruz Bay Clothing** and **St. John Kids** have particularly nice merchandise.

Freebird sells eclectic jewelry, including the attractive Caribbean hook bracelet, while its neighbor **Verace** sells one-of-a-kind designer jewelry. **Palm Jewelers** specializes in handcrafted jewelry using colorful native stones. A personal favorite, **Dreams and Dragonflies**, adjacent to Wharfside Village, sells colorful crafts and unusual gifts not seen elsewhere. **Galeria del Mar** has colorful paintings of island life as seen by a dozen local artists. **St. John Spice Co.** sells West Indian spices, jellies and jams, hot sauces and brightly painted wall hangings for the kitchen. **The Turquoise Turtle** is a swimwear shop selling suits from Brazil as well as sandals, wraps and Panama Jack hats.

Nearby, **Every Ting** (Bay Street) is a shop that indeed offers a little of everything – Caribbean music CDs, books, picture frames decorated with shells and colorful cotton clothing. There's a coffee bar and Internet service.

Raintree Court (King Street) is home to St. John's only surf shop. **Love City Surf Shack** is the best place to go for beachwear, casual clothing and accessories.

Browse at **Pink Papaya**, a colorful gift shop at **Lemon Tree Mall** (King Street). Featured are works of art by well-known local artists and island-themed dinnerware. There's a kid's section, unique silver and costume jewelry and Caribbean Christmas ornaments year-round. **Deborah Designs**, also in Lemon Tree, sells jewelry and gifts designed and fashioned by local artisans.

Meada's Plaza is home to two interesting shops. The ground-floor shop has imported African wood carvings and masks, bowls made of uncut gemstones and colorful hammocks. The shop on the second level has a wonderful collection of dolls – dressed in gilded banana leaves and hand-crocheted dresses.

St. John Editions, on Northshore Road near the National Park office, sells Caribbean resortwear.

Mongoose Junction

With a delightful jumble of craft shops and enthusiastic artisans, this is the best place to shop on St. John. The items are handmade here, are not run-of-the-mill souvenirs, and the shops themselves are delightful to browse in. Pottery, folk art, paintings, fabrics as art and gold- and silversmithing co-exist happily and, while the turnover is great, you can count on an equally interesting shop moving in. The exceedingly friendly and helpful staffs and artists are all eager to please and will make items to your specifications if given a few hours or days notice.

I enjoyed **The Fabric Mall**, with screen-printed cloth framed to hang on the wall, Dutch batiks and soft sculptures for a child's room or kitchen.

Donald Schnell is a talented potter. His wheel turns out bowls, vases and candlesticks. You can watch him at work. He expertly wraps his pieces so you can take them home safely. **Wicker, Wood and Shells** is an uncommon souvenir shop featuring gifts made with those materials and lots of others as well. The **Pattons**, Mongoose's resident gold and silversmiths, make avant-garde jewelry much like that made in Greenwich Village years ago. Items here are more expensive than the other shops, since their materials are quite costly.

The Caravan Gallery is a unique shop that features ethnic jewelry, works of art and tribal artifacts from many parts of the world. Jewelry is particularly lovely in silver or brass or beaded. **Bamboula** is another shop that stocks unusual finds. Primitive carvings, baskets from Africa, clothing from Indonesia and inexpensive jewelry are among the wares.

Hurricane Alley and **Big Planet Outfitters** sell brand-name clothing, beachwear and accessories. Snorkel gear too.

Recent additions include a "**Jewels**" shop that sells fine watches and designer jewelry and the **Kharma Boutique**, which sells chic clothing and handbags. Popular too is the **Body Deli**, where hand-made beauty products are prepared from all-natural ingredients.

When your dogs begin to growl, drop into **Sun Dog Café**, where you can have coffee or tea and pastries on the terrace or the **Deli Grotto**, which is a popular take-out sandwich and salad shop. It serves breakfast and lunch at its half-dozen tables too.

Coral Bay

The Jolly Dog at **Shipwreck Landing** sells T-shirts, hats and mugs featuring their Jolly Dog logo. **Mumbo Jumbo** at **Skinny Legs** sells tropical clothing and gift items. **Big Fish** at **Coccoloba Shopping Center** sells colorful island clothing and funky gifts.

Three Virgin's Bikini Company adjacent to the shopping center sells swimwear – mostly bikinis.

The Syzygy Gallery at **Skinny Legs** uses original mosaic designs by owner Lisa Crumrini to accent mirrors, bowls and stained-glass windows. Other artists on display include **Barr Lewis**, who works with pen and ink and fashions stunning collages, and **Cheryl Gellar**, who sells vintage jewelry.

Best Places to Stay



St. John's individuality is evident in the accommodations available. Your choices, though limited in number, include two world-class resorts – Caneel Bay and the Westin St. John Resort and Villas. Each is set on a pristine bay and, in the case of Caneel Bay, there are seven beaches within the resort grounds. Unique too are the renowned campground accommodations, which range from tents at Cinnamon Bay managed by the USVI National Park Service to the four distinctive eco-resorts operated by Maho Bay Camps. There are a few basic West Indian inns in Cruz Bay, but the best accommodations are at B&Bs, villas, condos and private homes scattered throughout the island. There are scores of rental agencies for you to work with. Those opting for villas and such will find it easy but not inexpensive to stock up on provisions from basics to gourmet at local specialty markets.

St. John Hotel Price Scale

To give you a ballpark figure to budget with, we have devised the scale below. It is based on the price of a double room in high season (Dec 15 to April 30). It does not take hotel amenities into account. At other times you can expect to pay 25% less. Inquire about special rates as part of a travel package.

Deluxe	$350+
Expensive	$251-$350
Moderate	$150-$250
Inexpensive	under $150



An **8% government tax** will be added to your rate each night. The resorts add a **$20 resort fee**.

Resorts

CANEEL BAY
Box 720
Cruz Bay, St. John
USVI 00831-0720
☎ (340) 776-6111, www.caneel@rosewoodhotels.com
Deluxe

It seems strange at first to find a luxurious resort that caters to the refined tastes of moneyed people on St. John, which takes pride in its simplicity and uncommercial atmosphere. Yet, Caneel fits into its surroundings and its owners have gone to great pains to preserve the natural beauty of the island. No tall buildings, no crystal chandeliers. Luxury definitely. But no opulence. Caneel's elegance lies in its unaffected good taste.

In 1955, Laurence Rockefeller purchased a small fishing resort which had existed on St. John since the 1930s. He donated it to the Jackson Hole Preserve, a non-profit conservation organization started by the Rockefeller family.

Jackson Hole bought land on the island which they then donated to the Federal Government to create a National Park. Caneel's 170 acres, encompassing seven beaches, all within the Park, are still owned by Jackson Hole. Management of the hotel was taken over by Rosewood Hotels and Resorts in 1993, which has renovated the guest rooms and upgraded the facilities without changing the essential serenity.

The 166 guest rooms are prudently scattered throughout the property, some just a few steps from a beach and others set atop hilly knolls overlooking the bay. The attached buildings, housing up to a dozen bedrooms, are enhanced by the profusion of sea grape, hibiscus, bougainvilleas, flamboyants and expertly manicured lawns. Feel free to flop into one of the hammocks stretched between two flowering tropical trees.

Since the hotel was built in stages, the accommodations are not identical. Those rooms directly on a beach are the most expensive, while those on the hill near the sugar mill or tennis courts are less pricey. All rooms have private terraces or patios and are refurnished with attractive rattan furniture and pastel shades on the walls and bedspreads. Bathrooms (only a few have tubs) have modern fixtures, good mirrors and lots of toiletries.

Rooms are now air-conditioned – something that caused grumbling by "regulars," but they have managed to keep out TVs and telephones. There are ceiling fans. Guests return annually, often reserving their favorite room upon departure. It is heavily booked in the high season, and February is sold out by the previous summer.

There has been a relaxation of several of Caneel Bay's "traditions" under Rosewood. Children are now permitted year-round and that has encouraged young guests. There is even an organized children's program for children aged five to 13 and a baby-sitting service for younger children. There is an additional fee for these services. Also relaxed is the dress code. Men are asked to wear collared shirts and closed footwear at both the Equator and Turtle Bay Estate Restau-

rants. But Bermuda-length shorts in addition to long pants are now permitted at the Equator. Jackets, which were required at Turtle Bay, are now requested.

Caneel operates on the European plan, but you can select a modified or full American eating plan. Several of Caneel's special packages include food in the rate. You can dine in one of three dining rooms. The informal **Beach Terrace** in the main building is open to the bay. All three meals are served here and sumptuous buffets are the bill of fare for lunch and dinner. The adjoining cocktail lounge is famous for its thick piña coladas – the best I've ever tasted. Atop a hill is the picturesque **Equator**, in a flower-covered restored sugar mill. It serves grilled meats and fish as well as tropical fare. The most elegant, formal service is at **Turtle Bay Estate House**, a romantic plantation-style mansion. Afternoon tea and cocktails are served in the adjoining living room.

Adjacent to the Beach Terrace, the **Reading Room** is furnished with comfortable couches, board games and an honor library. You can sip a cocktail and listen to a steel band or calypso group after dinner.

There are 11 tennis courts, with a pro and a pro shop. Court time is free. Use of watersports equipment, including snorkel gear, windsurfers, small sailboats and rafts, is complimentary. The activity desk will arrange scuba trips, sightseeing tours and car rentals. You can walk to Cinnamon Bay or hop a Surrey taxi to explore St. John on your own. A shuttle bus operates on the property from 6:45 am to 11:15 pm.

While prices are high, they include many activities. Off-season rates are far less than those in the high season and there are money-saving package tours.

> **Did you know?** Over one thousand couples spend their honeymoons at Caneel Bay each year.

Check in at the Caneel desk at Cyril E. King Airport in St. Thomas, where a cab will whisk you to the Caneel ferry.

THE WESTIN ST. JOHN RESORT & VILLAS
Box 8310, Great Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 693-8000, www.westinresortstjohn.com
Deluxe

This resort sprawls around its own marina and a secluded 1,200-foot sandy beach on Great Cruz Bay (south of the town). Built as a Hyatt Regency, it was a welcome addition to an island where there is still a dearth of hotel rooms. When Westin bought the property, it undertook a major renovation of the public areas, rooms and facilities so it is now truly first-rate. Accommodations (282 units) include spacious guest rooms and suites. All have Westin's trademark "Heavenly Beds," rattan, wicker and light-colored furniture, with views of the ocean, pool area or colorful gardens. Many have patios or terraces.

Additionally, there are 67 villas in the **Westin Vacation Club** on the grounds. Some are individually owned, while other are used for time-sharing. Rentals are made through the hotel. Villa guests enjoy all hotel privileges – perfect for families.

Thirteen gray cedar-roofed buildings, accented by magenta awnings, are scattered on 34 acres, criss-crossed by red brick walkways and beautiful landscaping. Palm trees were even imported from Puerto Rico. The huge pool is at the heart of the resort and there is a big sundeck as well. It's just a few steps to the dock and beach, where watersports equipment is available, much of it gratis. That includes use of windsurfers, kayaks, Sunfish, Hobie Cats and snorkel gear. The **watersports center** also arranges waterskiing, scuba dives and fishing trips. Great Cruz Bay has offshore reefs close enough to snorkel over and the hotel has installed a swimming raft, a trampoline and an "iceberg" slide just a short swim offshore.

The new **fitness center** offers spa services. There are salt scrubs, aloe wraps, cleansing facials, reflexology and

LaStone massages (using hot and cold stones). Manicure and pedicure services are available. The fitness center opens at 6 am daily. Six **tennis courts** on the hillside can be lit for night play. Hotel activities range from iguana feeding to beach volleyball and adult scavenger hunts.

This is a family-friendly resort and many activities are planned with children in mind. There are float races, family bingo and a family Olympics. For an additional fee, the **Westin Kids Club** offers a full range of supervised activities for children three to 12.

The hotel has excellent dining options. **The Beach Café and Bar** serves breakfast and is famous for its buffets and theme nights. It also has an à la carte dinner menu. **Snorkels**, at poolside and along the beach, serves lunch and afternoon cocktails. Good sandwiches and salads. **Chloe & Bernard**, on the hotel's second level is independently operated, and named after two fictional characters that travel around the world in search of new and delicious recipes. The menu therefore changes frequently and blends ethnic specialties with continental cuisine. There is a comfortable cocktail area and piano or local entertainment every night. Reservations suggested. ☎ (340) 714-6675.

B&Bs

ESTATE LINDHOLM
Box 1360, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 776-6121, www.estatelindholm.com
Expensive

Estate Lindholm was settled by Dutch planters in 1820. On St. John's north shore, it overlooks Cruz Bay harbor and is a 10-minute walk to town. The Danes worked the plantation and then abandoned it and it fell into decay. Brion and Lauren Morrisette purchased the estate, within the grounds of the national park, in the 1950s and lived here with their

children. Recently they converted part of it into an elegant 10-room B&B, each room with a harbor view. The rooms have white walls, light woods and bed coverings, and high beamed ceilings. Each is uniquely furnished and has air-conditioning, wet bar, microwave, small refrigerator and cable TV. All have covered balconies. Estate Lindholm has a pool and a small, well-equipped fitness center. The grounds are lovely, with flowering plants and trees. The restaurant **Asolare** shares those grounds.



The walk back from town is all uphill. A car would be a plus here.

GARDEN BY THE SEA
Box 1469
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 779-4731, www.gardenbythesea.com
Moderate

A second option is the lovely Garden by the Sea Bed & Breakfast, north of Cruz Bay and between Frank and Turner Bays. It is on the shore of the Audubon Sanctuary Pond. The large house was built in the 1970s in typical Caribbean gingerbread style. The grounds are filled with exotic plants, palm trees and swinging hammocks. There are only three guest rooms and, though they are individual in size and style, none are air-conditioned, nor do they have telephones or TVs. The second-floor Terrace View Room has hardwood floors, an elephant bamboo canopy bed and a Japanese fountain. Gauzy white curtains cover the French doors that lead to the private deck. This room has a full bath. The Garden Suite has a bedroom and a living area, with deep blue walls and an elephant bamboo trundle couch. Its large picture windows and deck face the gardens. It has a Caribbean shower. The Wild Ginger Room is cool and airy with a view of Frank Bay. It is particularly nice at sunset. It does not have a deck, but there is a sitting area with large windows. It too has a Caribbean shower. Breakfast is served

on the verandah. Fresh fruits and homemade breads, muffins and quiches are served with coffee and a variety of teas.

Unusual Campgrounds & Eco-Resorts

CINNAMON BAY CAMPGROUND
Box 720, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ 776-6330, www.cinnamonbay.com
Reservations: (800) 539-9998
Inexpensive

Caneel's neighbor in the National Park is Cinnamon Bay, opened in 1964 as the Caribbean's most complete campground and operated by Rockresorts. It is now operated by the National Park Service. If memories of long ago Scouting sleepovers spring to mind – forget it. Cinnamon Bay is roughing it in luxury. Located on a wide stretch of sugary white sand, there's a commissary, restaurant, bath house with showers (albeit cold ones) and complete watersports center. You even have a choice of accommodations – an erected tent, cottage or a bare site – all just a few steps from the beach.


Cinnamon Bay is a great place for families.

The 56 tents and 40 cottages come well equipped with charcoal grills, propane stoves, utensils for cooking and eating and ice chests for refrigeration. Even the linen is changed weekly. Each section has a communal lavatory and bath house with showers and fresh running water. Whichever accommodation you choose, invest heavily in bug spray.

The cottages (15 x 15), with electricity and outdoor terraces for eating, have two concrete and two screened walls, four twin beds. Two cots can be added.

Tents (10 x 14), built on a slab floor, have picnic tables nearby which are lit by gas lanterns and moonlight. Often,

dinner becomes a communal effort with neighbors collaborating on the meal.

Bare sites have grills and picnic tables, but nothing else is provided save the community facilities. Bring your own tent, bedding, utensils and equipment. No rentals here.

A snack bar offers breakfast and lunch every day and the **T'ree Lizards** restaurant is a perfect evening setting to enjoy island specialties and barbecues.



While the commissary is good for extras and fill-ins, you'd do better stocking up on provisions in Cruz Bay. Try the **Starfish Market** in The Marketplace Mall, on Southshore Road. It's open 7:30 am-9 pm every day. The **Marina Market** is another good choice. It too is on Southshore Road.

The on-site **Water Sports Center** rents sailboats, snorkel gear and underwater cameras at a small fee. They'll arrange scuba trips for certified divers and lessons for novices. There are guided hikes, snorkel trips and evening lectures.

Camping is limited to 14 days (December-May 15th) and to 21 days (May 16th-November 30) in a one-year period. The campgrounds are closed in September.

Guests from all over the US gather here and many fast friendships have started at a communal shower.

 **Tip:** Reserve early.

MAHO BAY CAMPS
Box 310, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 776-6226, www.maho.org
Moderate

We've all had dreams of doing something out of the ordinary, but few of us have the perseverance and know how to trans-

late our dreams into reality. Three cheers for Stanley Selengut and his colleagues, whose dream of an ecological community in the National Park became reality in 1977. Maho was designed to balance a closeness to nature with a sense of community camping. Building this without upsetting the fragile environment created problems over and above the norm. The entire community is linked by a network of raised wooden boardwalks and stairways. Water pipes and electrical lines are attached to the bottom of these walks, eliminating the need to dig up the ground cover. Maho's 114 canvas tent-cottages are perched on decks set into hillsides overlooking a curved strip of beach. The 16 x 16 Tree Houses have only one room, but the Sleeping Nook can be closed off by a screen. A convertible sofa in the living room sleeps two more. The kitchen niche has a two-burner stove, ice cooler and cooking and eating utensils. You can eat at a table on your patio. Tents are equipped with electric lights, bed linen which is changed weekly, towels and blankets. There is no running water.

Centrally located bath houses have low-flush toilets and automatic turn-offs on the showers and sinks to conserve water. Human waste is converted into fertilizer used to irrigate the garden. One group of bathrooms has composting toilets that use no water at all.

But the finest ingredient in Maho is the people who've stayed here. They have added to the sense of community and the spirit of cooperation that exists. One shining example is the **help yourself center**, where groceries, books and toys are left for new comers by departing guests.

There is a commissary with staples, frozen foods and fresh fruits and vegetables. Wine and beer are sold but no liquor. Prices are high but consider the costs involved in bringing the things here. You can stock up in St. Thomas or in Cruz Bay.

There are barbecue areas where guests swap food and yarns about the day's adventures. You can enjoy the company of other guests at the communal restaurant for breakfast and

dinner. A dinner menu is posted daily. You sign up and a local chef will prepare dinner, often local dishes (but not always). The restaurant also functions as a community center. Games for kids, concerts, theatrical performances and lectures by Park Rangers are given here.

The local beach is perfect for swimming and beginning snorklers or you can hop the **Paris Shuttle** to Trunk Bay or Cinnamon Bay. It makes several runs to town daily. Snorkel equipment can be rented at Maho. The Activities Desk will arrange scuba trips, windsurfing and excursions for you.

HARMONY STUDIOS

(See Maho Bay Camps)

A step up from Maho Bay Camps, both literally and figuratively, Harmony Studios are perched on the hill above Maho's tent-cottages. The second of Stanley Selengut's eco-resorts provides its guests with more creature comforts, such as private baths, but maintains the same "green" concept. Harmony was built using recycled materials and great care was taken to minimize tree loss during construction. Electricity is generated by the sun and roof wind scoops draw cool air into the studio.

There are a dozen studios housed in six two-story buildings. The Bedroom Studios have two twin beds, kitchenettes with microwaves, appliances and utensils, a dining area, tiled bath and a deck facing the sea. Rollaway beds are available so these studios can sleep three. The Living Room Studios are larger, with a queen-size bed and two twin beds, plus all the other amenities above. All studios share tile floors and undyed cotton fabrics. South American handicrafts add a splash of color. Harmony's guests share all of Maho's facilities, including the watersports programs and cultural events. The rates are higher here but still moderate.

ESTATE CONCORDIA STUDIOS
(See Maho Bay Camps)

Proving that Selengut's creativity is not confined to the island's north shore, Estate Concordia Studios was opened on the island's rugged south shore, which is largely underdeveloped and surrounded by the national park. Set on 51 acres, nine good-size studios overlook Salt Pond Bay and its rocky but beautiful beach. Selengut's most upscale development, Estate Concordia has six cottages all connected by boardwalks. The cottages and boardwalks are slightly elevated so they do not destroy the ground cover. Boardwalks lead to the hillside pool. There are no other facilities here but the studios are only a few minutes by car from Coral Bay.



A car is a must since this area is quite remote.

Here again there are two types of accommodations. The Full or Partial Ocean View Studios have a queen-size bed and, with a rollaway added, can sleep three. The Full Ocean View Loft Duplex Studios have loft sleeping areas with two twin beds and a full-size futon. Rollaways can be added to sleep six. All units have fully equipped kitchens, bathrooms, ceiling fans and decks. The studios were constructed of recycled materials and energy for the appliances is wind- and solar-generated. Rates are high/moderate.

CONCORDIA ECO-TENTS
(See Maho Bay Camps)

If you've ever wanted to go on a camping trip but were put off by the idea of roughing it, you'll be pleasantly surprised to see the 18 tents just over the hill from Estate Concordia. Looking like tree houses, the tent cottages have running water, composting toilets and kitchen facilities, including propane stoves and ice coolers. Everything is solar- and wind-power. There are twin beds and queen-size futons for sleeping and the dining area has large screened windows to afford views of the Caribbean and Salt Pond beach. Once again, a car is a must since this area is rather isolated. That's exactly what its devoted coterie want. Moderate.

West Indian Inns

These small inns are owned by local families. They offer comfortable surroundings and friendly hosts, but are quite simple in ambiance. Their in-town locations make them convenient to restaurants, Surrey buses and the ferry.

THE INN AT TAMARIND COURT
Box 350, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 776-6378, www.tamarindcourt.com
Inexpensive

The 20 guest rooms that enclose an inner courtyard are small but comfortably furnished with twin beds and colorful fabrics. Some rooms have private baths, while the six single rooms share. Rooms are air-conditioned and there is daily maid service. Continental breakfast is included in the rate. There are a score of umbrella-covered tables in the tree-filled courtyard. Every night of the week, a different island chef serves ethnic specialties at dinner – Greek cuisine one night, Mexican the next and sushi on the third night. Call or walk by (Route 104) to check on the schedule.

ST. JOHN INN
Box 37, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 693-8688, www.stjohninn.com
Inexpensive

Formerly the basic Cruz Inn, this inn was upgraded and totally refurbished. Rooms are small but comfortable, with wrought iron beds, new mattresses, pine and antique armoires and Ralph Lauren bedding. All the carpets have been replaced. Bathrooms are also small but have been upgraded. The rooms in the main building are air-conditioned. Guests share bathrooms here. There are five junior suites. These housekeeping units have sofa beds, kitchenette, private bath, cable TV and VCR, small refrigerator and coffeemaker. Continental breakfast is included. Guests

gather at the courtyard pool or bar, where there is a huge satellite TV.

Rental Homes, Villas & Condos

An intriguing option for a housekeeping holiday and a particularly good option for families is to rent a private home, villa or condo. Some are part of developments, while others stand alone. All are clean (a service does the job before you arrive) and have full kitchen facilities. Some even have washer/dryers, linens and towels. Many have sports equipment and some include a vehicle rental. Not always luxury choices, the lodgings are nonetheless tastefully decorated by their owners and are situated in areas with superb views. Some sleep six, others fewer. Be specific about your needs when inquiring. While not a necessity, a car or jeep would be a gigantic plus as cabs do not cruise on the island. You'll be met at the ferry in Cruz Bay and escorted to your home. Minimum rental is one week in high season and two-week periods are preferred. Rentals are handled by brokers rather than individual owners.

Suite & Villa Resorts

GALLOWS POINT
Box 58, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 776-6434, www.gallowspointresort.com
Reservations: (800) 323-7229
Expensive

As the ferry approaches Cruz Bay, you'll spy several attractive gray buildings on a peninsula jutting into the harbor. Recently renovated and totally refurbished, the 60 units at Gallows Point offer an informal, relaxed home-away-from-home atmosphere. Upper-level suites have skylights, loft bedrooms and private balconies. Those on the ground

floor have sunken living rooms. All the suites contain fully equipped kitchens and there is maid service. There are ocean and harbor views – both are lovely. There is a lima bean-shaped pool with sundeck, but no beach. Guests do snorkel and swim in the bay here, but with so many stunning beaches nearby, you'll probably prefer to explore. **Zozo's Restaurant**, which is part of the complex, is a popular eatery. You can rent by the day, but most guests stay for a week or even longer. Town is a five-minute walk downhill.

SUITE ST. JOHN AT GALLOWS POINT
21604 Goshen Oaks Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20882
☎ (800) 348-8444, www.gallowspoint.com
Expensive

Suite St. John, a rental agent, manages eight of the finest suites at Gallows Point. These have been totally refurbished to include king-size beds, cable TVs and CD players. Space is limited since many guests are repeats.

SUITE ST. JOHN-LAVENDER HILL ESTATES
21604 Goshen Oaks Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20882
☎ (800) 348-8444, www.lavenderhillestates.com
Moderate

Suite St. John, a rental agent, now manages all 12 condos at Lavender Hill Estates, which is just a short walk to Cruz Bay. There are four two-bedroom penthouse condos and several one-bedroom condos. They surround a freshwater pool. All bedrooms are air-conditioned and two condos have computers. Units have tiled decks overlooking Cruz Bay Harbour, full kitchens and cable TVs with VCRs and CD players. There are on-site laundry facilities.

COCONUT COAST VILLAS
Box 618
St. John, USVI 00831
☎ (340) 639-9100, www.coconutcoast.com
Reservations: (800) 858-7989
Moderate

Families should consider Coconut Coast Villas, which sit at the water's edge on Turner Bay. There are 10 units in all, ranging from a studio to a three-bedroom, three-bath apartment. All have full kitchen, TV, air-conditioning and private balcony. Units are attractively decorated with colorful fabrics and local art.

SUITE ST. JOHN. BATTERY HILL SUITES
21604 Goshen Oaks Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20882
☎ (800) 348-8444, www.suitestjohn.com
Moderate

A hill above Cruz Bay and Pillsbury Sound, Battery Hill houses five suite accommodations, as well as a cottage. Some of the suites are duplex. Although not identical, they all have white wicker furniture with floral prints, verandas and full kitchens. They share a good-sized pool and sun deck. All are air-conditioned.

LAVENDER HILL SUITES
12 Oak Lane
Scarsdale, NY 10583
☎ (800) 975-5001, www.lavenderhillsuites.com
Moderate

Gleaming white fixtures in the kitchen and bathrooms, pastel floral fabrics and beige wicker furniture give the eight suites on this hill above Cruz Bay a modern contemporary look. They have decks and balconies plus cable TVs, VCR and Internet connections. There is a comfortable pool, laundry facilities, BBQs and parking. Suites can be configured to suit large parties.

SERENDIP CONDOMINIUMS
Box 273, Cruz Bay
St. John, USVI 00801
☎ (888) 800-6445, www.serendipstjohn.com
Inexpensive

The condos here (10) are rather basically furnished and seem like motel rooms, but they have fully equipped kitchens and private verandahs. The one-bedroom rooms have an air-conditioned sleeping room and two sleep sofas in the fan-cooled living room. The studios are fully air-conditioned. They all have cable TV. There is a communal laundry room and BBQ grill. There are no other amenities.

Rental Agents

Some well-respected rental agents follow.

Seaview Homes, Box 644, St. John, ☎ (888) 625-2963 or www.seaviewhomes.com. Represents one- to five-bedroom homes.

Viva, Box 1747, St. John, ☎ (340) 779-4250, www.vivacations.com. Represents 30+ homes and villas.

Caribbean Villas & Resorts, Lumberyard Bldg, Cruz Bay, ☎ (800) 338-0987, www.caribbeanvilla.com. Represents 65+ villas.

Caribe Havens, Box 455, Cruz Bay, St. John, ☎ (340) 776-6518, www.caribehavens.com. Private home rentals.

Carefree Get-Aways on St. John, Ltd., Box 1626, St. John, ☎ (888) 643-6002, www.carefreegetaways.com. Private home rentals.

Private Homes For Private Vacations, Mamey Peak, St. John, ☎ (340) 776-6876, wwwprivatehomesvi.com. Private home rentals.

Great Caribbean Getaways, Lumberyard Bldg, Cruz Bay, St. John, ☎ (800) 341-2532, www.greatcaribbeangetaways.com. Vacation homes and villas.

Windspree Vacation Homes, Coral Bay, St. John, ☎ (888) 742-0357, www.windspree.com. Home and villa rentals near Coral Bay.

Best Places to Eat



St. John has an astonishing number of restaurants when you consider its population of 5,000 people. A score of gourmet restaurants with classically trained chefs have opened, and, unlike upscale eateries in previous years that barely lasted one season, these newcomers have exhibited staying power. Set in restored sugar mills, on mountain tops and at seaside, they have eclectic menus (many changing daily) with specialties from all over the world, including the Caribbean. Caneel Bay Resort has two gourmet restaurants, while Chloe and Bernard at the Westin Resort (but independently owned) is another elegant stop. (See *Best Places to Stay*.) We'll detail the fine locally owned dining options in Cruz Bay, Mongoose Junction and elsewhere on the island. On those evenings that you prefer to dine casually, the options are even greater. You can expect unusual menus and friendly service whatever option you choose.

A few of the fine dining places close in the fall – usually October. It is low season and that allows the staff to take vacations and the chef to explore new menus.

Reservations are essential at fine dining spots year-round since they are invariably small. They are suggested at all restaurants in high season.

Money Matters

Since virtually all foodstuffs are imported, prices are similar to those you'd pay at home. Expect to pay over $40 per person for a three-course meal without alcoholic beverages at those restaurants we've listed as

fine dining. A far larger number of eateries are small affairs – high on local color and with eclectic menus. They are informal and moderately or inexpensively priced.

Keep in mind that your days will be filled with activity and lunch can be an inexpensive empañada or BBQ ribs on the go. That way you can splurge on dinner.

Many restaurants serve only dinner. We'll note those that are open for lunch. Dinner is served early and most places are closed by 10:30 pm. Note that the small West Indian spots do not accept credit cards.



Hotel restaurants often include a **service charge/tip**. You can leave an additional amount for good service.

St. John Restaurant Price Scale

Based on a three-course dinner (per person): appetizer or soup, main dish, dessert and coffee. Cocktails and wine are extra.

Expensive	over $40
Moderate	$30-$40
Inexpensive	under $30

Fine Dining Island-Wide

ASOLARE
Caneel Hill, Northshore Road
☎ (340) 779-4747
Expensive
Dinner only

A unique experience here on St. John, Asolare is an Asian restaurant drawing on dishes from several countries. It gets my vote as the island's most beautiful eatery. You can see Cruz Bay and some of the British Virgin Islands from its perch atop a hill, five minutes from Cruz Bay by taxi. A member of the well-trained staff told me that "Asolare"

roughly translates to "passing time leisurely without purpose." And you'll certainly want to dine in leisurely fashion here. All dishes are prepared to order, you'll never feel rushed. One of Asolare's best dishes is the Tartare Tower. Served as an appetizer, it has layers of tuna and salmon tartare alternating with layers of sushi rice and baby green wakami salad. Other starters include lemongrass shrimp ravioli and a crispy bean sprout salad. For your main course, sample the Indochine bouillabaisse, the Madras curried catfish or the Guangzhou Cornish hen. Save room for desserts, which are innovative and delicious. Casual chic attire.

THE STONE TERRACE
Waterfront (at Bay Street)
☎ (340) 693-9370
Dinner only
Expensive

The Willis family is energetic and entrepreneurial. Albert and Lonni Willis came to St. John with their two young sons during the winter of 1975 and never returned to Long Island. In time they owned a rental car company, a small inn, two shopping malls and two restaurants. Their son Aaron, a graduate of the prestigious Culinary Institute of America, is the executive chef at The Stone Terrace and The Fish Trap (below).

The newer Stone Terrace is housed in a native stone building that resembles the pirate warehouses in Charlotte Amalie but is unique here. Climb the stone steps to the restaurant on the second level's sweeping terrace. There are only 16 tables, most of them under a retractable awning beneath the star-filled sky. Make your dinner reservation, but come early and have a cocktail on The Banana Deck Bar on the covered porch. Starters include crab cakes with lime aioli, grilled margarita-marinated prawns and Thai curried chicken tortillas. Main courses are an eclectic lot. A recent menu offered grilled hoisin-marinated salmon, curried coco-

nut rice, roasted duck with orange glaze and peppercorn-encrusted tuna. Casual chic attire. Closed Mon.

LA TAPA
Centerline Road
☎ (340) 693-7755
Dinner only
Moderate-expensive

Owner/chef Alex Ewald has a winning formula in tiny but terrific La Tapa. If you select a sidewalk table you can watch all of St. John walk by, but you'll probably be more comfortable inside where it is quieter and has a bistro ambience. Alex changes her menu monthly, but you'll always find her signature dish, "paella for two," on the menu. The appetizer-sized tapas (six varieties daily) are served with chunks of bread and often accompanied by chilled sangria. Smoked salmon with capers, cashew-breaded goat cheese, buffalo mozzarella with tomatoes and tiny bites of meat are among the choices. Entrées include deliciously marinated brochettes of chicken, beef, fish, or chorizo served with three sauces, sherry-marinated duck and ziti Provençal with fresh vegetables. Casual chic attire. Closed Tues.

ZOZO'S RISTORANTE
Gallow's Point Resort, Bay Street
☎ (340) 693-9200
Dinner only
Expensive

Readers of *Travel + Leisure* magazine selected Zozo's as the best restaurant in the USVI. It's hard to argue with that when you look at the sophisticated menu that offers Old World elegance complemented by an easy-going island attitude. When you add in the stunning views from its new location at Gallow's Point, above Cruz Bay, you can see why reservations are essential. Chef Scott Bryan makes the pasta fresh each day and uses it in a variety of dishes, including the house favorite with hot Italian sausage. The fried calamari with pesto aioli and the scallop bruschetta

with goat cheese and Portobello mushrooms are great openers. Entrées include osso bucco and steak and lamb dishes. Dine on the patio or the roof-covered indoor dining room. Casual chic attire.



No children under five are allowed at Zozo's.

PARADISO
Mongoose Junction
☎ (340) 693-8899
Dinner only
Expensive

The rich wood on the walls and ceiling of Paradiso's indoor dining room give it the appearance of a plush yacht. Colorful posters and prints assure you that you are in the Caribbean. Paradiso's bar is a big lure for young charterboat crews at sunset when they have hors d'ouevres and Happy Hour.

The menu features contemporary American specialties such as plum tomato tart with prosciutto, lobster, shrimp and mussel ceviche and tuna carpaccio with smoked salmon and red onion. Entrées include beet-poached salmon, pepper-cured lamb loin and potato-wrapped local mahi-mahi. While the indoor dining room is air-conditioned, the terrace tables are prime viewing spots.

CHATEAUX BORDEAUX
Estate Bordeaux, Rte. 10, Centerline Road
☎ (340) 776-6611
Dinner only
Expensive

This is a Continental restaurant with a great view. Located at the highest point of the island, with the twinkling lights of St. Thomas and Jost Van Dyke (BVI) as backdrops, Chateaux Bordeaux is a romantic dining spot. The smoked chicken spring roll is served over pasta and the seafood chowder is thick with chunks of shrimp and lobster. Lobster crêpes and escargots bruschetta are good openers as well.

Chicken pasta pillows (chicken, ricotta and sun-dried tomatoes) and pork tenderloin stuffed with andouille sausage, apples and walnuts are island favorites, as is the New Zealand rack of lamb with a honey Dijon and pecan crust. You'll enjoy lingering here for dessert or an after-dinner drink. Casual chic attire.

TAGE
Centerline Road
☎ (340) 715-4270
Dinner only
Expensive

Not well signed, Tage occupies a private house on the incline of Centerline Road. It is small, with tables in an indoor dining area and a roof-covered terrace. The owner/chef Ted Robinson was for a long time the chef at Paradiso (Mongoose Junction). His menu features American fare that would seem right at home in California. Start with grilled chicken spring rolls or the lemon and garlic calamari. The spinach-bacon salad with roasted pecans complements the lump crab cakes. If you are very hungry try the mixed grill with lamb chops, braised short ribs and chicken-apple sausage. Served with sweet potato and polenta, it is enough for two. For lighter fare, try the pan-roasted scallops with fries and shitake mushrooms. Casual chic attire. Closed Sun.

TEN TABLES
At Chilly Billy's, Boulon Center
☎ (340) 693-8708
Dinner only
Expensive

At 2 pm when Chilly Billy's staff stores the salt and pepper shakers and maple syrup, the staff of Ten Tables arrives to cover the tables with starched tablecloths, candles, colorful china and glassware. The chefs begin to assemble and prepare the ingredients for the eclectic continental cuisine served at dinner from 6 pm to 10 pm. The menu changes frequently, but a recent menu included Prince Edward Island

mussels steamed in a shrimp broth, baby-back ribs with papaya slaw and sesame scallion shrimp toast on mixed greens. Entrées include rack of lamb, NY strip steak and grilled duck breast. Delicious. There are only 10 tables so be sure to reserve (after 3 pm daily). Casual chic. Closed Sun-Mon.

Casual Dining, Cruz Bay & Mongoose Junction

PANINI BEACH TRATTORIA
Wharfside Village
☎ (340) 693-9119
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

If you've never sampled a panini sandwich, this is the place to do so. Especially popular at lunch, these pressed, grilled sandwiches are filled with meats, cheeses and vegetables. They are served hot. Try balsamic onion bread salad or Caesar salad with your sandwich. The dishes here are prepared in Northern Italian fashion, which means that sauces are light and not very spicy – just right for the hot climate. Pasta dishes can be served as appetizers or main courses. Those with fresh clams and shrimp are the most popular. Pizzas are also popular main dishes. Health food fans will enjoy "the veggie," with zucchini, yellow squash, mushrooms, peppers, onions, spinach and feta cheese. At $10, it's a great deal. Pastas and pizzas are served at both lunch and dinner. Dinner also finds chicken, beef and fish dishes. Panini Beach sparkles. It has several indoor dining areas and a covered porch just above the sand. You can watch the busy dock from the porch. Don't miss the homemade gelati (Italian ices). Casual attire.

RHUMB LINES
Meada's Plaza, King Street
☎ (340) 776-0303
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

Rhumb Lines, in the courtyard of Meada's Plaza on King Street, has a dozen tables scattered across the patio. Some are umbrella-covered. The menu features foods from the Pacific Rim and tropical climes in a relaxed Caribbean setting. The most popular dishes here are the small pupu dishes that are tropical "tapas." Each dish is enough for two to sample and you'll want to try several. They vary but often include duck potstickers, Thai spring rolls, shrimp, fish and chicken satays, blackened shrimp or cold sesame shrimp. The pupu dishes are served at lunch and dinner.

Lunch offers mango gazpacho and shrimp pad Thai, but also burgers and sandwiches. Dinner includes crabcakes, shrimp and corn fritters and mahi-mahi cooked in a banana leaf.

Casual attire. Closed Tues.

> **Did you know?** A rhumb line is a line on a sphere that cuts all medians at the same angle. You learn something new every day.

CAFÉ ROMA
King Street
☎ (340) 776-6524
Dinner only
Moderate

Café Roma was complacent when it was St. John's only Italian restaurant, but it has now refurbished its space and expanded its menu to meet the competition of ZoZo's and Panini Beach. The restaurant is fully enclosed, which is unusual for the island. You'll need to climb the steps to this second-floor spot. Café Roma is much like a stateside neighborhood Italian restaurant. The owner is very proud of the pizzas here – indeed they are delicious. The menu includes

many pasta dishes, eggplant parmigiana, baked clams and mussels and a variety of salads. It also offers scores of vegetarian dishes. Main courses include chicken cacciatore, veal marsala with mushrooms, shrimp with spicy eggplant and tomatoes, shrimp and calamari with linguini, as well as many other familiar favorites. Casual.

MORGAN'S MANGO
Northshore Road
☎ (340) 693-8141
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

A funky choice in a ramshackle building across from the National Park office, Morgan's Mango thrives because it serves very good food and its eclectic menu has something for everyone. Tables are scattered on the patio or in the garden, where they are strategically placed to avoid the towering palms. There is a U-shaped bar, front and center, which serves alcoholic beverages, as well as fresh fruit and vegetable juices. The blenders get quite a workout. The menu mixes Caribbean, South American and vegetarian dishes. Empañadas, Jamaica junk chicken, voodoo snapper and Cuba's citrus chicken are served, as are local fish and pastas. It's a fun place and is always crowded. Opens for lunch and stays open into the night.

BALCONY ON CRUZ BAY
Wharfside Village
☎ (340) 774-8470
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

On the second floor of Wharfside Village, the tables here sit on a tarp-covered terrace facing Pillsbury Sound. This is the same space occupied by Pussers and Café Wahoo, but they say that three's the charm.

The Balcony opens at 11 am for lunch. The Mediterranean salad with lots of greens, olives and peppers is delicious and

goes well with the fish n' chips, burgers, wings and wraps. Fried calamari and artichoke and mussel fritters are fine with cocktails at sunset. In the evening, lobster crêpes, ahi tuna sashimi and a spicy Caribbean bouillabaisse are popular entrées. Balcony also serves Sunday brunch from 10:30 am-3:30 pm. Casual attire.

HATSUMAMA
Northshore Road
☎ (340) 626-2076
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

Serving Japanese and Asian fusion dishes in a casual open-air setting, Hatsumama is most crowded at lunch (11 am-3 pm) since the rapid service does not lend itself to lingering over dinner. The food is delicious, however, and, because it's light, the dishes are just right for the tropics. Start with chicken potstickers or the tuna carpaccio. Beef and chicken satays and soba noodle salad make a good duo. Heartier fare includes chicken or tofu stir fry, pork spare ribs or blackened scallops with spinach and shitake salad. Casual attire.

LIME INN RESTAURANT
Lemon Tree Center, King Street
☎ (340) 776-6425
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

On a roof-covered terrace in the rear of the shopping center courtyard, Lime Inn is open for lunch and dinner. Popular with charter crews, the restaurant has special dining events such as Wednesday night's Shrimp Feast – all you can eat for a fixed price. Lunch features main dish salads (chef, green), teriyaki chicken, sandwiches and burgers. Dinner includes pasta, chicken dishes and seafood. Informal. Closed Sun.

FISH TRAP RESTAURANT
Strand Street
☎ (340) 693-9994
Dinner only

Adjacent to Raintree Court, a small shopping mall near Bay Street, the Fish Trap has an indoor dining room and a large dining terrace. Owned by the Willis family (who also owns Stone Terrace, above), the Fish Trap specializes in seafood, with the accent on international styles of cooking and fresh ingredients. They also have chicken, steak and pasta. Their homemade desserts are famous. Closed Mon.

DUFFY'S LOVE SHACK
King Street Alley
☎ (340) 776-6065
No credit cards
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive
Like a giant tree house built around a central bar, Duffy's leads the funky dining scene here. On two levels, it has leopard-covered pillows on its wooden benches and chairs, with a thatched roof. The bar, always crowded, draws most of the attention on the lower level. The menu includes tacos, burritos, ribs and cowboy steak. A late-night menu (10 pm-midnight) offers burgers, wings and fritters.

WOODY'S SEAFOOD SALOON
Centerline Road
☎ (340) 779-4625
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

Similar in style to Duffy's and around the corner, Woody's is open daily from 11 am to 1 am. Shark bites, beer-battered shrimp, steamed mussels and drunken shellfish are the foods of choice. Happy Hour from 3 to 6 pm. Lots of take-out here.

CHILLY BILLY'S
Near Boulon Center
☎ (340) 693-8708
Breakfast, lunch
Inexpensive

A colorful second-floor tree house, Chilly Billy's serves breakfast and lunch every day from 8 am to 2 pm. Breakfast specialties, including burritos, omelettes, pancakes and monkey bread French toast, are served all day. Salads and sandwiches are added at lunchtime. Chilly Billy's shares this space with Ten Tables (see *Fine Dining*).

MARGARITA PHIL'S
Northshore Road
☎ (340) 693-8400
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

There's always laughter at this hybrid Mexican cantina/Caribbean restaurant. Maybe because it offers 15 different tequila-based cocktails! South of the Border gazpacho shares the menu with crab empañadas and conch fritters. There are a half-dozen enchiladas with conch, shrimp or crab, as well as sizzling fajitas with chicken, shrimp and beef. Look for chalupas con queso, burritos and quesadillas. Very casual.



Polli's Mexican Restaurant in the Lumberyard complex has a similar menu to that of Margarita Phil's but adds barbecued ribs and chicken as well as burgers. Terrace dining plus an air-conditioned bar and indoor dining room. ☎ (340) 775-4550. Lunch, dinner. Inexpensive, Very casual.

RUMBALAYA CARIBBEAN GRILL
Wharfside Village
☎ (340) 714-6169
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

A family-friendly stop on Wharfside Village's lower-level patio. It has counter service and umbrella-covered tables. Look for jerk chicken wraps, fish tacos, buffalo wings and salads. Catch of the day, lobster and stir fry at night. Very informal. Closed Mon.

West Indian Dining

SOGOS
King Street, near Lemon Tree Center
☎ (340) 779-4404
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

You can sample a few local dishes at the "fast food" spots below, but for a wider range of traditional specialties and sit-down service, head to Sogos. This small dining spot has a dozen pink-topped tables and friendly owners. Alfred and Veth Augusten came to St. John from neighboring Dominica, bringing with them a variety of local favorites. West Indian restaurants typically use the freshest ingredients available, so menus are changed daily. Some specialties frequently featured are conch fritters and stew, spicy fried fish, BBQ ribs and meatballs, curried chicken, goat stew and braised lamb loin. Main dishes are accompanied by kalaloo, Johnny cakes, rice and peas and fungi. Veth prepares the desserts, many of which use local fruits. Closed Sun.

Fred's on King Street, a basic place to eat, is very popular because it is inexpensive and has the best ribs on St. John. The dozen tables are covered in plastic and there is no written menu. Fresh local fish, goat and mutton are common at dinner. Open 9 am-10 pm, except Sun. Very informal. No credit cards.

Hercules Pate is a lunch stand near the car ferry dock. He is best known for his pates, the Caribbean word for empañadas, which are pastries filled with shredded beef, chicken and pork. All have vegetables as well. Long lines form at lunchtime. Hercules is open from 6 am to 1 pm, except Sun. No credit cards.

Cap's Place is nearby in a ramshackle building near the Post Office. Very crowded at lunch time when local workmen pick up fried fish and cold sodas to eat on nearby benches. It's rather like buying a hot dog from a push cart. No credit cards.

Joe's Diner is not a diner but a fast-food spot specializing in burgers, salt fish cakes, hot dogs and fried chicken. There's soft ice cream as well. Good place for breakfast. There are a few tables. Joe's is on King Street. No credit cards.

Uncle Joe's BBQ, located opposite the Post Office in Cruz Bay, is standing-room-only at lunch (or early dinner) since the juicy ribs, open-pit barbecued chicken and steaks are delicious. The house-made barbecue sauce, corn-on-the-cob, rice and coleslaw all add to the treat. A few rickety tables are available, but take-out is king. Head to the nearby park benches. Inexpensive. No credit cards.

Casual Dining in Coral Bay

MISS LUCY'S RESTAURANT
Salt Pond Road
☎ (340) 693-5244
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

An eclectic menu and a fun-loving ambience make Miss Lucy's a popular local hangout. Serves West Indian specialties like kalaloo and rotis, but also Greek salads, burgers and herb-crusted tuna with sun-dried tomatoes. There is a "Full-Moon" party on Fri nights and it offers a Caribbean pig roast with all the trimmings. Sun brunch 10 am-3 pm. Closed Mon.

SKINNY LEGS
Emmaus Street (near the fire house)
☎ (340) 779-4982
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

A relaxed, casual bar and grill serving hamburgers, hot dogs, fried chicken and fish from 11:30 am to 11 pm every day. Horseshoes, darts, satellite TV for major sports events and live music on Sat nights make this bar St. John's friendliest.

SHIPWRECK LANDING
Route 107, Coral Bay
☎ (340) 693-5640
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

Seaside dining overlooking Coral Bay, Shipwreck Landing serves conch fritters, blackened shrimp, fresh seafood, stir-fries and pastas. It's open for lunch 11 am-4 pm and dinner from 6-10 pm. From 4-6 pm they offer a bar menu with lots of finger foods and cool drinks.

VI'S SNACK SHACK
East End Road
☎ (340) 693-5033
Breakfast, lunch
No credit cards

Vi's is famous for its garlic chicken and conch fritters. Not much to look at, on the East End of Coral Bay. Check on hours before heading out. Open Tues-Sat 9 am-4 pm.

ISLAND BLUES
Estate Carolina, Coral Bay
☎ (340) 776-6800
Lunch, dinner
Inexpensive

Set in a pastel-painted West Indian building on the harbor in Coral Bay, Island Blues is known for its homestyle kitchen. All the specialties – soups, wings, seafood and the special daily quesadilla – taste like grandma made them. The bar can seat over 20 people and is standing-room-only at Happy Hour and well into the evening, when there is often live music.

Picnic Fare & Provisions

If you want to pick up some food before heading to the beach or if you have rented a condo or villa and want to do some of your own cooking, you have several good options.

The Simple Feast in Palm Plaza (near the Westin Hotel) is a gourmet market that sells prepared foods, as well as meats, produce, and wines. Open 7 am-7 pm daily. ☎ (340) 714-7989.

Starfish Market, in the Market Place on Rte 104 near Cruz Bay, is a supermarket that also sells deli sandwiches and prepared foods. Hours are 7:30 am-9 pm every day. ☎ (340) 779-4949.

Marina Market, also on Route 104 near Cruz Bay, is primarily a supermarket. It sells wines and liquors too. Hours are 8 am-8 pm, Mon-Sat. ☎ (340) 779-4401.

Deli Grotto in Mongoose Junction opens for breakfast daily at 7 am and closes at 6 pm. Sunday hours are 8 am to 3 pm. There are a half-dozen tables to enjoy your pancakes and oatmeal. Take-out includes panini sandwiches, as well as some old favorites such as the New Yorker, with corned beef, Swiss cheese and coleslaw. There are subs, lots of salads and soups. Good smoothies too. ☎ (340) 777-3061.

China Shack, The Market Place (2nd floor), is great for take-out. The menu is large and includes sweet and sour chicken, shrimp and tofu stir frys, shrimp with lobster sauce and Hunan-style, plus lots of lo meins. There are a few counter seats. China Shack delivers. Lunch weekdays 11 am-3 pm, dinner Mon-Sat 4:30-9 pm. Closed Sun. ☎ (340) 715-4998.

The Dolphin Market, Boulon Center, Centerline Road, is a full-service market with a deli and liquor department. Open 7:30 am-11 pm daily.

Lily's Gourmet Market, Coccoloba Center, Coral Bay, is the town's first full-service store with basics as well as gourmet foods. There is a deli and a wine department.

After Dark



A fish fry on the beach, a steel band or calypso singer while you dine, maybe some jazz – informal and low key – that's nightlife on St. John. No discos, but some restaurants have small dance floors.

Cruz Bay/Mongoose Junction

Compass Rose, at Pastory Gardens, has music with dinner nightly (5-10 pm) and a late-night menu from 10-midnight. Check on concert schedule.

The Banana Deck, King Street, offers casual dining, rum-based drinks and live reggae on Fri and Sat nights.

Morgan's Mango, Northshore Road, serves more than 30 exotic drinks, Caribbean cuisine and live jazz on Tues and Thurs.

Woody's Seafood Saloon, on Centerline Road, Cruz Bay, stays open to 2 pm on weekends (1 am weekdays), with a full late-night bar menu, darts, draft beer and great conch fritters.

Duffy's Love Shack, King Street, has event nights, happy hours and music for dancing nightly. Live or DJ.

Larry's Landing, Wharfside Village, is a local watering hole with action at its pool tables and video games.

The Beach Café, a roof-covered open-air eaterie at The Westin offers casual dining and live music Thurs through Sun evenings. Saturday often features steel bands.

Chloe and Bernard's, The Westin's gourmet restaurant, offers jazz with dinner several evenings weekly and piano on the other evenings.

Near Coral Bay

Skinny Legs, Coral Bay, has a satellite dish, dart boards and horseshoe pits. Live music one night a week.

Shipwreck Landing, Coral Bay, offers casual seaside dining and live music on Wed and Sun nights.

Miss Lucys', Coral Bay, has full-moon parties each month featuring Caribbean pig roasts. Music at Sun brunch.

Voyages, Coral Bay, is always active with full-moon raw bar offerings, NFL football on a wide screen and the Coral Bay Dart League matches on Wed evenings. There are dance parties on Sat nights.

Quiet Mon Pub, Centerline Road (above La Tapa)
No credit cards. This Irish pub and cybercafé is a local hangout, especially at dusk when the day-sailors return to Cruz Bay. The cold beer flows and a daily menu is served. The food is often local favorites – not Irish. The computers are often occupied.

The National Park has several evening programs, which include informal discussions, slide shows and films. ☎ (340) 776-6201 or www.nps.gov/viis.

If you are looking for more action, you can hop the ferry to St. Thomas. The last return ferry leaves Red Hook at 11 pm.



Up-to-date listings can be found in ***St. John Escapade*** and ***The Island Trader***, local newspapers distributed in shops, hotels and restaurants. Free.

Excursions From St. John



You can easily visit St. Thomas for a day of sightseeing and shopping, or an evening out. There are ferries from Cruz Bay to Red Hook (East End) every hour, on the hour, from 7 am to 11 pm. The ferry from Caneel Bay to Charlotte Amalie runs several times a day till 7 pm. You can also visit Tortola and Jost Van Dyke, British Virgin Islands. See *Getting Here*, page 160.

St. John A-Z



BANKS

There are two banks in Cruz Bay. **First Bank** is one block from the ferry dock on King Street, ☎ (340) 776-6881. **Scotia Bank** is in the Market Place on Route 107, Southshore Road, ☎ (340) 776-6552. Hours are 9 am-3 pm weekdays. Both have ATMs.

BEAUTY SALONS

The Pampered Pause, on Northshore Road near Mongoose Junction, offers nail care, facials and waxing. ☎ (340) 779-4820.

The Grapevine Salon & Spa, in the Market Place on Southshore Road, offers hair services and massage in addition to nail services. ☎ (340) 693-9040.

BULLETIN BOARDS

These list community events such as fish fries and concerts. They are located at Cinnamon Bay Commissary and near Connections in Cruz Bay.

INTERNET & COMMUNICATIONS

A bustling office that offers answering services, Internet access, fax machines, photocopies and money orders. They even arrange day-trips. The Cruz Bay office is on the street near the ferry dock (it has no name). ☎ (340) 776-6922; www.connectionsstjohn.com. Coral Bay Office, ☎ (340) 779-4994.

MARKETS

The Simple Feast in Palm Plaza on Southshore Road, ☎ (340) 714-7989; **Starfish Market** in the Market Place, ☎ (340) 779-4949; **Marina Market** on Southshore Road, ☎ (340) 779-4401; and **Lily's Gourmet Market** in Coral Bay.

CYBER CAFÉ

Surf Da Web has a bank of computers for public use. Market Place, 2nd floor, ☎ (340) 693-9152.

LOCAL RADIO

Lite pop and Caribbean music on Mongoose 104.9 FM.

MEDICAL CARE

Cruz Bay Family Practice, Boulon Center, ☎ (340) 776-6789. 24-hour access.

Myrah Keating Smith Health Center, ☎ (340) 693-8900, on Southshore Road. 24-hour access.

PHARMACIES

Chelsea Drugstore, Market Place, ☎ (340) 776-4888.

St. John Drug Center, Boulon Center, ☎ (340) 776-6353.

PHOTO PROCESSING

Cruz Bay Photo sells photographic equipment and supplies and offers quick processing. In Wharfside Village. Open Mon-Sat. ☎ (340) 779-4313.

POST OFFICE

The Post Office is on the no-name street that leads left from the waterfront. It's near the small park.

REALTORS

Want to own a piece of paradise? Well-respected realtors are listed below:

Town & Country Real Estate, Mongoose Junction, ☎ (340) 693-7325; www.towncountryusvi.com.

American Paradise Real Estate, Coral Bay, ☎ (340) 693-8352; www.americanparadise.com.

Islandia Real Estate, Islandia Bldg. Cruz Bay, ☎ (340) 776-6666; www.islandiarealestate.com

TOURIST OFFICE

The St. John office is in the small park that faces the ferry dock. Hours 10 am-1 pm and 3-5 pm weekdays.

VIDEO STORES

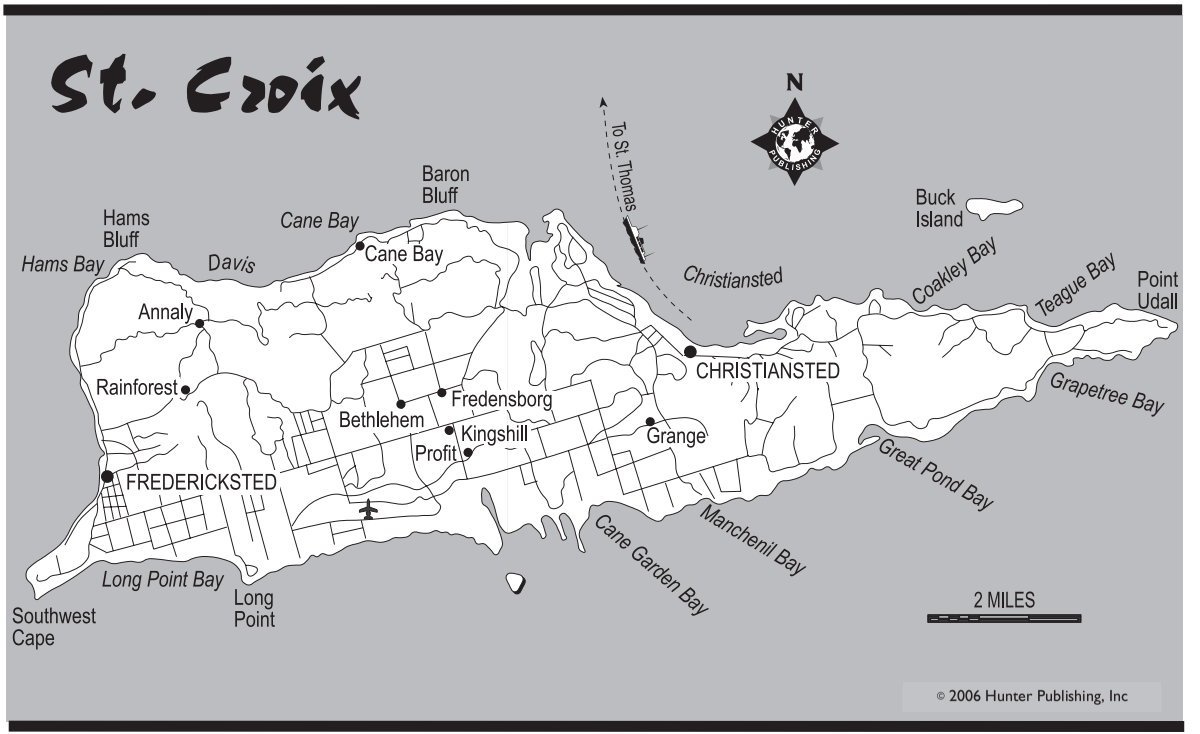
Kaleidoscope Video has a large branch in The Market Place, ☎ (340) 779-4464. A smaller branch is in Coral Bay (near Skinny Legs), ☎ (340) 715-0880. Mon-Sat 11 am-8 pm, Sun 1-7 pm.

VOLUNTEERS

The VI National Park maintains an archaeological lab at Cinnamon Bay where they often need volunteers for field work or cataloging. ☎ (340) 776-5090.

DONKEYS

There are over 400 feral donkeys on St. John. Their ancestors were brought to the island to haul sugarcane when they were the only cargo haulers and mode of transportation. When autos were introduced, the donkeys were turned loose and have multiplied. If you spy them on a beach or trail, don't approach. They are wild animals.


St. Croix
N
To St. Thomas
Baron Bluff
Hams Bluff
Cane Bay
Hams Bay
Davis
Cane Bay
Annaly
Rainforest
Bethlehem
Fredensborg
Kingshill
Profit
FREDERICKSTED
Long Point Bay
Long Point
Southwest Cape
Christiansted
CHRISTIANSTED
Grange
Buck Island
Coakley Bay
Teague Bay
Point Udall
Grapetree Bay
Great Pond Bay
Manchenil Bay
Cane Garden Bay
2 MILES
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St. Croix



St. Croix (Croy) offers a more traditional Caribbean vacation than does St. Thomas. It's a place to unwind, relax and recharge your batteries. Where the pace in Charlotte Amalie is bustling and frenetic, that of St. Croix's capital, **Christiansted**, is leisurely and laid back, and that of **Frederiksted** (the island's second town) is almost somnolent.

Although St. Croix's beaches aren't as beautiful as those of St. Thomas or St. John, the island itself is physically beautiful. Its 84 square miles are green and fertile, with rolling hills rather than mountains, and the island is dotted with picturesque sugar mills – both in ruins and restored – as well as elegant Great Houses. In the early 19th century, half the island was covered by sugar cane plantations and over 30,000 slaves worked here. St. Croix is almost three times the size of St. Thomas, yet it has only a few thousand more residents.

It's hard for today's visitors to comprehend the devastation caused by Hurricane Hugo in September 1989. Homes, businesses, churches, schools and libraries on every part of St. Croix were damaged or destroyed. Some two-thirds of the available hotel rooms, many restaurants and shops, as well as such key infrastructure as the cruise ship dock in Frederiksted, were knocked out. The island grappled with the long-term effects of that destruction for years. Ironically, Hurricane Hugo caused virtually every hotel to renovate and refurbish, allowing exciting new restaurants and shops to replace some tired old ones. The enlarged pier in Frederiksted is back in operation and wide-body jets arrive daily. A gambling casino has opened directly across the road from the Divi Hotel, which was rebuilt after Hugo.

As you drive around (roads are paved and well maintained), you will be struck by the variety of foliage. While the island gets little rainfall, it has over 40 varieties of orchids and

morning glories in addition to the tropical frangipani and bougainvillea. The eastern tip, which is the easternmost point of the US, is a virtual desert, with several types of cactus. In the northwest section you'll drive through a rainforest, where the road is shaded by towering mahogany trees and vines. You can feel the temperature drop.

Christiansted, which was laid out in 1734, retains its Danish character and architecture, although part of the town was destroyed by fire in 1866. Small hotels and restaurants are abundant in the town and others are scattered throughout the island. They too reflect the unhurried pace and relaxed style of the Crucians (*Croo-shuns*). The island has a few gourmet restaurants and boasts an unusual number of interesting eateries run by an eccentric and fascinating lot. Al fresco dining and eclectic menus are the norm.

Beaches are only a short drive from either Frederiksted or Christiansted, while many of the resort hotels front their own beach strips. All the beaches are on the Caribbean Sea, perfect for sailing, windsurfing and snorkeling. No visit to St. Croix would be complete without a trip to nearby **Buck Island**, with its fabulous marked underwater trails for snorklers and reefs for divers. Reached by sloops, schooners, catamarans and even by glass-bottom boats, the island is only 5½ miles off the northeast shore.

Carambola Golf Course, set mid-island in a palm-lined valley with lakes and ravines, is tough. For a change of pace, play the course at the **Buccaneer Hotel**.

The topography of the island makes it ideal for horseback riding and for hiking. We recommend some excellent stables and hiking trails in the pages that follow.

Each town has a picturesque colonial area to explore and their waterfronts, which are beehives of activity, are integral parts of the town. A sightseeing highlight, **Whim Great**

House, a museum set in a restored Danish plantation, is not far from Frederiksted.

St. Croix has a lot to offer, but it's too low key to boast.

Getting Here

By Air



St. Croix is 1,700 miles southeast of New York and 1,100 miles south-southeast of Miami. **American Airlines**, www.aa.com, ☎ (800) 433-7300, **Delta**, www.delta.com, ☎ (800) 221-1212, **Continental Airlines**, www.continental.com, ☎ (800) 231-0856, and **US Airways,** www.usairways.com, ☎ (800) 428-4322, offer flights to St. Croix from gateway cities on the mainland. A popular alternative is to fly to San Juan, Puerto Rico, then connect to smaller planes for the 40-minute flight to St. Croix. The connecting commuter lines are **American Eagle**, ☎ (800) 433-7300, **Liat**, www.liatairline.com, ☎ (268) 624-4727, and **Cape Air**, www.flycapeair.com, ☎ (800) 352-0714. For the best fare, get information long in advance and explore package tours organized by various hotels on the island.

All flights land at **Henry Rohlsen International Airport**, located mid-island on St. Croix's southern coast. After picking up your bags (there are no redcaps to assist you), head for the Information Counter to pick up free brochures including the magazine, *This Week in St. Croix.*

Airport taxi vans outside the terminal building will wait to fill up before making the 20-minute run eastward to Christiansted or the 15-minute run westward to Frederiksted. Fare is per person and by the destination. If you are heading for one of the resort hotels, you'll need a private cab. Prices are fixed. Ask to see the official fare chart (which should be posted but rarely is). The road to Christiansted passes the island's industrial zone, which in-

cludes the Hovensa Oil Refinery and several aluminum processing plants.

By Sea



While it will never rival St. Thomas as a cruise ship destination, Frederiksted's **Ann E. Abramson Port Facility** has been greatly expanded and renovated. It allows for two cruise ships to dock at the same time. ☎ (340) 774-8784 or visit www.ships.vi for up-to-date details.

Getting Around the Island

Car/Jeep Rentals



There are many car rental agencies on St. Croix and most of them rent jeeps as well. Roads are paved and well maintained. Unless you want to explore in areas off the beaten path, a car will be fine. International rental companies have kiosks at the airport and elsewhere on the island, including major hotels. Local companies provide airport pick-up service for weekly rentals. A car is a big plus even if you choose an in-town hotel. Keep in mind that beaches are scattered around the island, as are major points of interest.

CAR RENTALS	
Hertz	☎ (340) 778-1402
Avis	☎ (340) 778-9355
Budget	☎ (340) 778-9636
Olympic Rent a Car	☎ (340) 773-8000
Judi of Croix	☎ (340) 773-2123

Driving Tips

Traffic keeps to the left here. Renters must be 21 years of age and have a valid driver's license. The speed limit is 35 mph and 20 mph in residential areas.

There are only two real highways. **Melvin H. Evans Highway** (Route 66) leads west from the airport to within one mile of Frederiksted and east to mid-island. **Queen Mary Highway** is better known as **Centerline Road**. Each of these roads have 55 mph speed limits.

Scooter Rentals

Tommy's Scooter Rentals has free delivery and pickup. ☎ (340) 332-2118.

Bicycle Rentals

St. Croix Bike, at 70 King Street, Christiansted, offers bike tours as well as rentals. ☎ (340) 772-2343.

Taxis



Cabs are plentiful and there is usually a line-up on King Street, Christiansted and at the pier in Frederiksted. They can be flagged in the street, and are even permitted to pick up additional passengers going in the same direction (unless you object). Rates are fixed by person and distance, and a rate sheet should be posted in each cab. However, that is rarely the case, so agree on the fare in advance.

Bus



VITRAN air-conditioned buses make the 17-mile run between Christiansted and Frederiksted along Centerline Road on a regular basis. Ask your hotel clerk for the stop nearest your hotel.

Island Tours



You can tour the island by cab. Agree on the fare in advance and be sure to specify the stops you want to make.

Cruzan Taxi Association in Christiansted. ☎ 773-6388.

Frederiksted Taxi Service. ☎ 772-4775.

St. Croix Safari Tours runs half-day tours on their safari bus (open side, canvas roof) that visits six island highlights, including the Botanical Garden, Whim Plantation Museum and the Rain Forest. The bus leaves from King Street, Christiansted at 10 am. ☎ 773-6700.

The tour is narrated by a tour guide who talks about St. Croix's history, politics and cultural traditions.

Inter-Island Travel

St. Thomas & St. Croix



The most popular and fastest transport is a plucky seaplane service operated by **Seaborne Airlines**, ☎ (340) 773-6442 or www.seaborne-airlines.com. Planes take off from Christiansted's harbor and land 25 minutes later in the harbor of Charlotte Amalie. There are over a dozen flights each day. The terminal is on Watergut Street near the boardwalk.

Seaborne Airlines also has flights from St. Croix to Old San Juan. There are three flights daily.

Also connecting St. Croix, St. Thomas and Puerto Rico are **Cape Air**, ☎ (800) 352-6714 or www.flycapeair.com, and **Caribbean Sun**, ☎ (866) 864-6272 or www.flycsa.com.

Virgin Islands Fast Ferry is a catamaran service that makes the 40-mile crossing between St. Croix and St. Thomas in 75 minutes. It has air-conditioned seating and open-air decks as well. It's a terrific ride. Let's hope it will be

successful, but check before making plans. Previous ferries have not lasted. At this writing, service runs from mid-December to early May. There are two scheduled crossings (each way) weekdays, except Tuesdays, and three scheduled crossings (each way) on weekends and holidays. There is no service on Christmas Day and there are extra crossings during Carnival celebrations (St. Croix's in December-January and St. Thomas' in April). ☎ (340) 719-0099 or www.virginislandfastferry.com. Expect to pay $65 RT and $38 one-way for adults. Children under three ride free while those age three-12 pay $54 RT or $34 one-way. Holiday surcharge is $5.



There is no air or ferry service between St. Croix and St. John.

Crime



St. Croix has had more than its share of bad press over the years. Crime is a problem here, as it is elsewhere, but it is not specifically directed toward tourists. If you read the local newspapers, you will see that Crucians are angry and concerned about the problem. Community leaders have taken steps to improve the situation. Programs are being conducted in the schools and in the communities to help resolve problems.

One result of Hugo was a kinder, gentler St. Croix. Crucians from all walks of life joined together to rebuild the island and in the process they came to value the visitor, to be more hospitable. They are more open about sharing their pride in this lovely island with you.

Common sense is the key to a great vacation.

- Stick to the maze of downtown streets filled with people, hotels and restaurants, and avoid dark, unlit areas.

- Avoid the cruise ship dock in Frederiksted after dark.
- Don't wear expensive jewelry while sightseeing or at the beach.
- Avoid carrying large sums of money.
- Swim on beaches where there are other people.
- Lock your car.

Trips to Buck Island

Signs advertising trips to Buck Island abound all along Christiansted's waterfront. In truth, a day trip to the island, 5½ miles off the northeast coast, is the highlight of a St. Croix vacation. If you are like most of us, you will want to return to Buck Island several times. Even non-swimmers will have an enjoyable day, while snorklers and divers will have an adventure.

Your options are unlimited, so check them out by strolling along the waterfront and asking questions. A typical day will consist of the ride to the island followed by an hour and a half of snorkeling along the trail or on your own. You may stop at **Turtle Beach** for a picnic lunch (bring your own food; the ship provides beverages), walk the primitive hiking trails and snorkel or dive over the reef. Rates are controlled by the National Park Service.

Buck Island and its reef are National Monuments administered by the National Park Service. The reef offers shallow-water snorkeling over two marked underwater trails. If you are inexperienced, a guide will take you. Arrow markers and signs on the ocean floor will lead you along the trail in 30-45 minutes. You can then snorkel on your own or scuba dive over deeper waters off the reef if you have certification. The reef is like an underwater house made of various types of coral in assorted sizes and shapes. Spires, staghorns, gorgonians, sea whips and fans make up the

home, which is inhabited by multi-colored fish and marine creatures. Parrotfish, black angelfish, yellow wrasses and trunkfish dart in and out of the nooks and crannies. Sharks, snappers and barracudas swim slowly by. It is simply breathtaking.

Buck Island itself has had a roller-coaster existence. The island has been inhabited since the mid-18th century, and was used for farming and pasture as well as lumbering for decades. At first there were thick forests of Pokholdt trees, but when goats were brought to the island for grazing, these were cut down. As the forest regrew, it and the land was constantly burned. The fires and the goats eventually reduced the island to a desert-like appearance. The goats were removed in the 1950s and the natural vegetation has returned. The island has become a nesting place for several Caribbean bird species. In 1961 the island was transferred to the National Park Service.

Hiking on Buck Island



The highest point on this 180-acre island is only 300 feet above sea level. It is rather dry, particularly in the eastern portion, where the trade winds and sun are strongest. Vegetation consists of low thorny bushes, organ pipe cactus and other desert-like plants. In other areas there are trees. A two-hour walk will take you around the entire island. A hiking trail leads through the vegetation to an observation tower at the top of the island. The trial is rocky, so you'll need sneakers. The views of surrounding waters, coral formations and the string of sailboats and glass bottom-boats are lovely. There are picnic tables.



Don't forget a **hat** and **suntan lotion**.

Getting There

Mile Mark Charters, also known as Caribbean Sea Adventures, offers half-day (am or pm), as well as full-day excursions to Buck Island. Excursions include a guided snorkel tour through the underwater trail and a stay on Turtle Beach. Snorkel gear and lessons are provided. Full-day Excursions include lunch. There are sailboats and power boats which have glass-bottoms. Their charters leave from King's Wharf, Christiansted. Expect to pay $50 for half-day and $70 for full-day trips. Children pay $10 less. ☎ (340) 773-2628, www.milemarkwatersports.com.

Big Beard's Adventure Tours also offers half-day and full-day trips. Their catamaran *Renegade* is the only glass-bottom sailing ship going to Buck Island. The *Buck Island Flyer* also makes the trip. Big Beard is known for its barbecue lunch served on a private St. Croix beach (full-day excursion only). Another perk is Cap't Big Beard himself. An ordained minister, he performs weddings on board. Full-day trips run $75 (adults) and $55 for children. ☎ (340) 773-4482, www.bigbeards.com. Big Beard's Tours leave from Christiansted's dock.

Diva Buck Island Tours is a smaller company with the luxurious *Diva*, a 35-foot Beneteau sailboat, carrying only six passengers to Buck Island from Green Cay Marina. ☎ (340) 778-4675.

Teroro II and ***Dragonfly*** leave from Green Cay Marina as well. The *Teroro* carries up to 11 passengers and makes both full- and half-day excursions. Capt. Heinz is a great guide. The smaller *Dragonfly* is a trimaran. It carries up to six passengers and Capt. Carl is often at the helm. ☎ (340) 773 3161.

A Capsule History



On November 14, 1493, Christopher Columbus dropped anchor off Salt River on the island's north coast. It was his second voyage to the New World. The small group of sailors sent ashore for water was attacked by fierce groups of Carib Indians. Columbus beat a hasty retreat. He named the island Santa Cruz (Holy Cross) and claimed it for Spain. The Indians called it Ay-Ay. The Spanish did little about their possession, concentrating instead on Puerto Rico. It wasn't till 1625 that colonies appeared on St. Croix. There was an English settlement on one end of the island, Dutch on the other and, later, a French settlement appeared. The three were constantly battling until 1649, when the French took control of the island and renamed it St. Croix. Eventually title passed to the Knights of Malta, a religious order that tried to establish farms here, but were unsuccessful. In 1655, St. Croix was returned to France, who decided to abandon it, setting fire to the houses and fields before leaving for Hispaniola.



Judith's Fancy (now the island's most exclusive residential area) has the best-preserved ruin from the early French settlements.

The Danes, who had colonized St. Thomas and St. John, purchased St. Croix in 1773 and the island flourished by producing sugar and rum. A slave uprising in 1848 persuaded Governor Peter Von Scholten to grant them independence. Alas, he did so before consulting his superiors and he was recalled to Denmark in disgrace. Without slave labor, the economy floundered, until the islands were purchased by the US in 1917.



Orientation

St. Croix is 23 miles long and seven miles wide at its broadest point. It has retained much of its Danish character, with ruins of sugar mills visi-

ble throughout the island and restored historic quarters in both towns. St. Croix is home to about 60,000 people, many of whom are transplanted from other Caribbean islands and Puerto Rico. There are two towns on St. Croix: Christiansted, on a reef-protected harbor on the northeast coast (too shallow for large ships), and Frederiksted, the deepwater port on the western coast. Cruise ships dock here and passengers are bused cross-island to the shops and restaurants in Christiansted.

Christiansted

The more cosmopolitan of the two towns has as lovely a downtown area as there is in the Caribbean. The maze of covered promenades and cobblestoned alleys that make up this area are crammed with shops in red-roofed pastel-colored buildings, small hotels and eateries. Five historic buildings maintained by the National Park Service sit on the edge of the harbor at King's Wharf. (See *A Walking Tour of Christiansted*, page 258.)

King's Wharf

A beehive of activities. Most water tours leave from here, as does the ferry to Protestant Cay. The National Park Office is here as well.

Protestant Cay

A tiny cay in the harbor and home to a luxury resort.

King Street

The second block from the waterfront promenade, it starts at King's Wharf and is the major shopping street.

King's Alley

A narrow street that connects King Street and Strand Street. Its square is picturesque, with shops, a restaurant and hotel.

Christiansted
Lagoon
Dock
Port Street
Anchor Way
Starboard Street
Flag Drive
Palm Avenue
East End Road
Garden Street
Green Street
Lobster St
Hospital St
Church Street
Queen Cross Street
King Cross Street
Little Hospital Street
New Street
East Street
Hill Street
Queen Street
Company Street
King Street
Strand Street
Waterglut
Fisher Street
Prince Street
Christiansted Harbor
Gallows Bay
Fort Christiansvaern
Scalehouse (Visitor's Bureau)
Customs House
Steeple Building
Post Office
Government House
Kings Alley
Pan Am Pavillion
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Strand Street

Strand is closed to traffic for several blocks and the town's newest shopping malls are located on it or near by. Many hotels and restaurants are here as well.

Company Street & Queen Street

The third and fourth streets running parallel to the harbor house hotels, shops, eateries and boites.

Queen Cross & King Cross

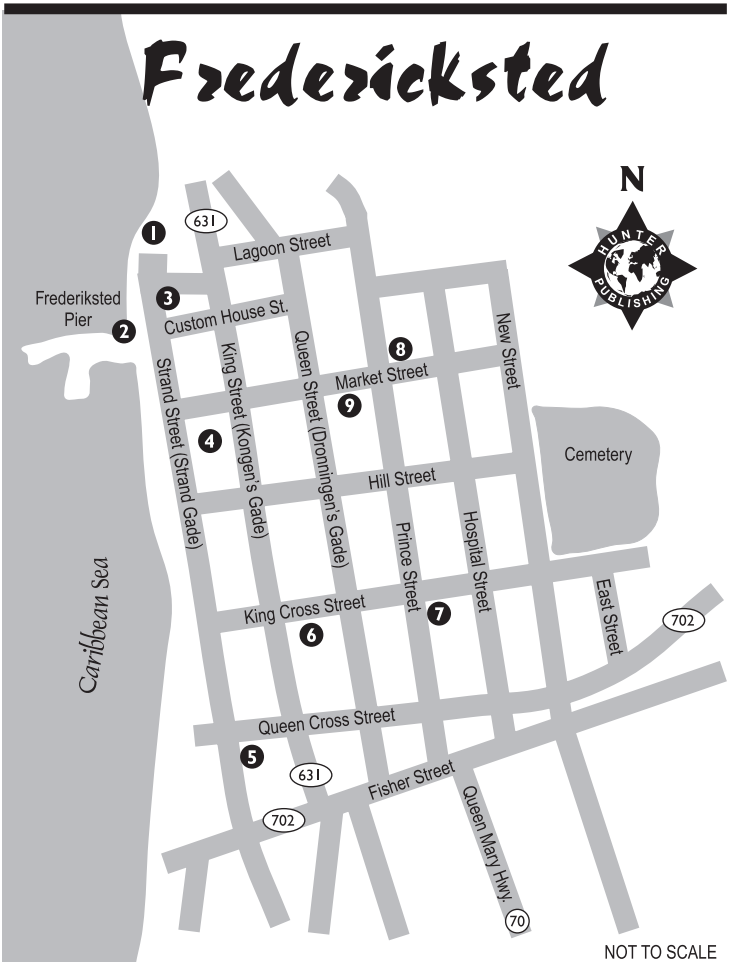
These are the two major cross-streets, the others being alleys.

Frederiksted

On the island's western shore, Frederiksted has wide tree-lined streets and a waterfront promenade with benches. Cruise passengers can rest in a modern edifice built at the dock. It looks rather out of place here since it is in the historic district and encircled by Fort Frederik, Emancipation Park and Victorian-style buildings. The town was destroyed by fire during labor riots in 1878, and the wooden structures with Victorian façades were built on the remaining Danish brick basements. Frederiksted needs a fresh coat of paint and a guiding force to inject some vitality. It has become rather shabby looking.



Buildings in both towns are numbered consecutively (e.g., buildings #25 and #26) on one side of the street from the waterfront to the town limits. They reverse on the opposite side of the street, where #1 is at the town limit and numbers rise heading toward the waterfront.



1. Fort Frederick
2. Visitor's Center
3. Old Customs House
4. Victoria House
5. Old Public Library
6. Apothecary Hall
7. St. Paul's Anglican Church
8. St. Patrick's Catholic Church
9. Public Market Place

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Strand Street

The waterfront drive is wide and tree-lined, with areas for sitting and sunning.

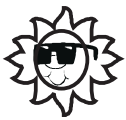
King & Queen Streets

The second and third streets off the waterfront house the town's restaurants and few shops.

Customs House

A small street that leads to the pier. The Tourist Office is lodged in the old Customs House, near the pier.

Sunup to Sundown



The combination of near-perfect weather and deep blue Caribbean waters means that much of your vacation will be spent on or near the water. St. Croix has some beautiful beaches and they are easily accessible. Since beaches are scattered on every coast, you can explore the island en route. Touring St. Croix is easier than exploring St. Thomas and St. John. The terrain is far gentler here. The coral reef which encircles the island and nearby Buck Island makes for outstanding snorkeling, especially off the northern shore. You can scuba dive off the beach here too.

The highlight of a trip to St. Croix is a visit to Buck Island National Park, six miles off the northeastern shore. Snorkeling over the reef is special, but even if you can't swim you should plan a trip here. Seeing this fascinating underwater world is an exhilarating experience.

Scuba diving, sailing, windsurfing and deep-sea fishing expeditions are all well organized and easily arranged.

To many visitors, a St. Croix vacation is synonymous with golf and they are content to challenge the tough 6,909-yard course at Carambola Golf Resort. For a change of pace, they play the 18 holes at the Buccaneer Hotel. Others practice their drop shots at one of the island's 50 tennis courts.

St. Croix's Danish heritage is more noticeable than on her sister islands. You'll want to spend some time strolling through the historic districts in Christiansted and Frederiksted. The silent ruins of sugar mills dot the countryside, which boasted vast plantations centuries ago. Surprisingly, none of them are operational and a working mill had to be imported from Nevis. The mill and other important historical memorabilia are housed at a restored estate, **Whim Great House**, which functions as a museum. As you drive through the countryside, you'll pass **Amos' Hope, Little Princess, Judith's Fancy** and **Solitude**. These former plantations are now residential areas. A lovely alternative is to explore the island on horseback.

You can shop for china, cameras, jewelry and perfumes at duty-free prices, or casually select local handicrafts. St. Croix lets you set your own pace. We'll start with the surf and sand.

The Best Beaches



Those staying in Christiansted's historic quarter will want to drive to the island's best beach strips, but there is a beach on Protestant Cay in the harbor. It is reached by ferry. The nearest beach to Frederiksted is a quarter-mile away and you can walk there.

Beach Tips

- Never swim at a deserted beach strip.
- Keep a wary eye out for sea urchins (black and spiny).
- Lock your car and leave all valuables behind at your hotel.
- Bring blankets, towels and food.
- Don't forget sunscreen and a hat.

In Christiansted

Protestant Cay: This tiny island, four minutes from Christiansted dock by ferry ($3), has a hotel with a good beach strip and an active watersports center. Non-guests can rent loungers and gear.

On the East End

The East End of the island has beaches on both its northern and southern shores. Closest to Christiansted and moving eastward along the northern coast are the following.

Buccaneer's Beaches: There are three beaches within the grounds of this hotel and one is open to the public. Beaugard Beach is approached through the guard gate and the entrance fee includes the use of the changing facilities. There are no rentals to non-guests, but there is a nice beachfront eaterie. Route 82 East.

Shoy's Beach: This long, sandy beach strip is adjacent to Buccaneer's beaches and offers a great view of Christiansted Harbour. Turn right at Buccaneer's gate and proceed to the parking lot. Follow the dirt path to the beach, which is rarely crowded. No facilities. Route 82 East.

Tamarind Reef Beach: This is a quiet shade-tree-studded beach that fronts Tamarind Reef Hotel and Green Cay Marina. It offers great views of Buck Island. There is good snor-

keling for beginners on the reef and the watersports center rents kayaks, as well as snorkel gear. There is a bar and a restaurant. Route 82 East.

Chenay Bay Beach: This is a great beach for kids, with shallow water and a long beach strip. There are shade trees and you can rent watersports gear, including Sunfish and kayaks. Casual beach restaurant and bar. Route 82 East.

Reef Beach: On Teague's Bay, Reef Beach has shade trees and an in-close reef that's good for snorkeling. The on-site watersports center rents gear, including windsurfers, which are most in demand. **Duggan's Reef Restaurant** (see *Best Places to Eat*) is open for lunch and dinner. There is ample parking. Route 82 East.

Cramer Park: This lovely beach strip is the last on the north shore. It is very crowded on weekends when young Crucians head here with boom boxes, frisbies and young lungs. There are cooking grills, bathrooms and changing facilities, but no lounger or watersports rentals. Route 82 East.

Jack's Bay - Isaac's Bay: Secluded and lovely, these twin beaches are almost at the island's eastern tip. Park at Isaac's Bay and walk to the sand. Nude bathing is common here. You can snorkel, but there are no facilities or rentals. These beaches are part of St. Croix's Nature Conservatory. The road is rutted so don't try to drive here.

Grapetree Beach: On the southern shore Grapetree Beach fronts the Divi Carina Bay Resort. Early risers can share the stunning sunrise with local sea turtles that nest on this beach. The hotel's watersports center rents kayaks, Sunfish and snorkel gear. There is a good restaurant and bar. Route 82 East to Route 60.

Northshore Beaches - West of Christiansted

Beaches on this shore are rugged and the waves are just right for surfing. Beach-entry scuba dives are the lure along this coast.

Judith's Fancy: St. Croix's best beach for board surfing. It has rolling waves year-round. Route 73 West to Route 751.

Salt River Bay & Columbus Landing Beach: A developing beach area, it is most popular as the kick-off point for kayak trips. You can snorkel and fish at Columbus Landing, where there is a restaurant. Route 75 West to Route 751.

Cane Bay Beach: The most popular beach on the island, Cane Bay is best known as the entry point for beach dives at the wall. It is only 250 feet from the shore. The reef is also fun for snorkelers who are strong swimmers. It's a very active strip with a dive shop and gear rentals. Try **Off The Wall** for food and drinks. Route 75 West to Route 80.

Davis Bay Beach: Within the grounds of Carambola Beach Resort, this is a beautiful strip studded with palm trees. There are watersports rentals and a bar and restaurant. Route 75 West to Route 80.

Near Frederiksted & the West End

The West End of the island is wider than the east and virtually the entire coast is lined with sandy beaches. Most are undeveloped, yet easily accessible. Listed below are those closest to Frederiksted and moving northward. All are along Route 63 North.

L'Attitude Beach: Just a quarter-mile from town, it has changing facilities and sports rentals. There is a beach bar and a good restaurant.

Rainbow Beach: A smaller beach another quarter-mile away. You must go through the restaurant and beach bar to the sand.

Sprat Hall Beach: The most impressive beach on the West End. The sand strip must be a mile long. Restaurant and beach bar. Modest entrance fee.

Monk's Baths Beach & Ham's Bay Beach: Farther north, these are good shelling beaches. Waves here can be rough.

The beaches that follow are south of Frederiksted along Route 71 South.

Sandy Point: This is the longest, whitest sand strip on the island. Home to a bird and wildlife habitat, it is only open on weekends. It is closed entirely from April 1-August 31 when leatherback turtles nest here. You can join a group to watch them hatch. Not a great snorkeling beach since it has a sandy bottom. No facilities.

Sand Castle Beach: This is a long, sandy strip that fronts two resorts. There are watersports rentals, restrooms and food.

Scuba Diving



Trips can be arranged to good diving sites in the waters near St. Croix. There are wrecks of ships and an airplane, underwater caves and pinnacles to explore. St. Croix is unique, however. Some of the best diving is right offshore and divers enter from the beach rather than a boat. The north shore drop-off runs from Salt River to Ham's Bluff – virtually the entire northwest coast. Called Cane Bay Wall, the two-mile-deep canyon walls have caves and tunnels that are alive with moray eels. Brain coral, sea fans, sea stars, a forest of elkhorn coral and black coral formations are found in depths of less than 60 feet, so inexperienced divers can enjoy them.

Buck Island is an excellent dive site, but be sure not to go near the snorkel trails. Reefs here are in superb condition.

You can dive off Frederiksted Pier, day or night. The pilings are covered with colorful sponges and algae. You'll be joined by lobster, octopus, crabs and sea horses. Other good easy-entry dive spots are at Long Reef and North Star Beaches.

St. Croix's "Dive Passport"

St. Croix's dive centers have banded together to create a dive passport that allows divers to pay one price and "explore underwater St. Croix" with any of the participating centers. Divers will therefore not be limited to the specific destination of any one center. At this writing, the $199 passport fee allows for six dives at any of 11 stunning locations with any of seven reputable dive shops. Calling themselves DIVERSe Virgin Inc., they include the Anchor Dive Center, Cane Bay Dive Shop, Dive Experience, N2 The Blue, St. Croix Ultimate Bluewater Adventures (Scuba), Scuba Shack and Scuba West. For more information, contact one of the centers below or log on to www.diversevirgin.com.

Dive Centers

If you are not yet a diver you might like to put your vacation time to work for you and learn to dive. Dive operators here are experienced and reliable. They have first-rate equipment and they offer all types of courses, from introductory to resort to PADI and NAUI open-water courses. If you'd like to take a course, you should get information in advance – particularly in season. Virtually all the dive shops offer a one-day introductory course, and with the ease of beach dives, beginners can be in the water almost immediately.

Anchor Dive Center at Columbus Landing in Salt River Park is a PADI 5-star resort. They conduct daily dives of the walls. If you buy a dive package, you'll get a free kayak tour.

They arrange individual itineraries for experienced divers. ☎ (340) 778-1522, www.anchordivestcroix.com.



Anchor also operates from the Divi Carina Resort and the Carambola Beach Resort.

Cane Bay Dive Shop is at the heart of the action on Cane Bay Beach. It is open seven days a week year-round and offers dive packages for all levels. It is also a PADI 5-star center. ☎ (340) 773-9913, www.canebayscuba.com.



Cane Bay Dive Shop has an additional location in Frederiksted and two dive stores in Cane Bay and Christiansted where you can buy first-rate gear.

Dive Experience was the first PADI 5-star center on St. Croix. They offer diver training from novice to instructor level. Their office at 1111 Strand Street in Christiansted is open seven days a week year-round. ☎ (340) 773-3307, www.divexp.com.

Scuba Shack, on the beach only a quarter-mile north of Frederiksted (look for Changes in L'Attitude), is also open daily. They specialize in west coast dives, particularly those near the Frederiksted Pier. The staff here is particularly helpful. ☎ (340) 772-3483, www.stcroixscubashack.com.

Scuba West on the Frederiksted waterfront is a full-service PADI center. They offer daily boat dives and specialize in Frederiksted Pier and night dives. They have a working arrangement with N2 The Blue, which specializes in small custom dive trips (no more than six divers) for experienced divers who want to avoid larger boats. ☎ (340) 772-3701, www.divescubawest.com or ☎ (340) 713-1475, www.n2blue.com.



N2 The Blue has its own dive shop on A La Valle (off northshore Road), a mile from Cane Bay Beach.

Snorkeling & Day-Sails



Since there are few uninhabited cays near St. Croix, virtually all day-sail boats head to Buck Island. The marked underwater trail at Turtle Beach is fun for beginners, but may be too tame for those who can handle more challenging spots. The boats will stop at other parts of the island for snorkeling.

Fortunately, several island beaches have close-in reefs to explore. Cane Bay Beach, Rainbow Beach, Chenay Bay Beach and Grapetree Beach are among the best. They all have watersports centers, where you can rent snorkel gear.

A few day-sail options follow:

Bilinda Charters sails from Green Cay Marina for half-day, full-day and sunset cruises. They head to pristine reefs on undeveloped bays of St. Croix. Full-day trips include lunch. All trips include snorkel gear. ☎ (340) 773-1641, www.sailbilinda.com.

Renegade, a 42-foot catamaran, is the only glass-bottom boat that sails to Buck Island and other destinations as well. Run by Capn. Big Beard's Adventure Tours, it is famous for its full-day beach barbecue. ☎ (340) 773-4482.

The ***Dragonfly***, a 38-foot trimaran, sails twice a day for Channel Rock Reef, where its six passengers can snorkel or learn to sail. Captain Carl is the lively instructor. Leaves from Green Cay Marina. ☎ (340) 773-3161.



Llewellyn's Charters uses a 38-foot trimaran for sailing and snorkeling to Buck Island's reefs. ☎ (340) 773-9027.

Fishing



Sportfishing is challenging and extremely rewarding in the waters off the Virgin Islands. Twenty-one record catches have been made in the area for weight and tackle in blue marlin, cobia, wahoo, kingfish and Allison tuna. **Long Bank**, the best fishing waters near St. Croix, is an easy run. No license is required. **Ham's Bay**, near Frederiksted, is a popular spot for locals and those who prefer to fish from shore. Trips include all tackle and bait.

Fishing With Carl is the company owned by Capt. Carl Holley, a transplanted Texan who many consider St. Croix's most personable fisherman. His 36-foot Hatteras, the *Mocko Jumbi*, leaves from the Christiansted waterfront for full- or half-day charters. It carries up to six passengers. The *Mocko Jumbi* can be chartered for several days as well. ☎ (340) 277-4042.

Salty Dog Charters, run by Capt. Aaron Aaron, is another good choice. He specializes in offshore live bait power drifting for mahi, wahoo and tuna. It has first-rate rods and reels. Three-person maximum. Leaves from Green Cay Marina. ☎ (340) 719-1419.

Catch-22 is the 38-foot Bertram operated by Capt. Bunny Jones. Short, half- and full-day deep-sea sportfishing charters are available. The *Catch-22* also leaves from Green Cay Marina. ☎ (340) 778-6987.



It is common for the captain to keep the catch. You can arrange to keep yours should you wish to.

Kayakin



Explore the island from the water on a kayak. The tours last about three hours and destinations include **Salt River National Park** and the **north**

shore. Lessons are included and all levels (and ages) of skill can be accommodated. There are sunset tours, as well as moonlight ones. Two companies offer kayak trips – **Caribbean Adventure Tours**, ☎ (340) 778-1522, www.stcroix-kayak.com, and **Virgin Kayak Co.**, ☎ (340) 778-0071.



You need not sign up for a tour. You can rent a sit-on-the-top kayak with paddles and life vests at **Caribbean Adventure Tours** headquartered on Salt River.

Watersports Rentals



St. Croix's resort hotels front stunning bays and beach strips. They have watersports programs and rentals, often managed by private companies that will rent equipment and give lessons to non-guests. Buccaneer Hotel alone does not do so. Best bets are at **Divi Carina Bay Resort**, **Chenay Bay** and **Tamarind Reef Resorts** and **Cormorant Beach Resort**. You'll find windsurfers, Sunfish and Jet-Skis. Several beach areas have rental facilities as well (see *Beaches*).

St. Croix Water Sports on Protestant Cay rents all types of watersports gear and offers parasailing, kayaking and semi-submersible boat tours. ☎ (340) 773-7060.

Golf



Carambola Golf Course, designed by Robert Trent Jones, is challenging enough for professionals, yet enjoyable for amateurs. Set in the northwest part of the island, it was built in 1966 to be part of a proposed Rockefeller resort. The hotel was not built, however, and the course, called Fountain Valley Golf Course and operated by Rockresorts, functioned independently. In 1987, Carambola Beach Resort became a reality and the course and hotel have a symbiotic relationship.

There are shuttle buses connecting the hotel and course frequently during the day. The hotel offers golf packages as well.

In the last decade, private homes, villas and golf villas have been built surrounding the course. There are three separate communities and six unique floorplans. The villas are often individually owned and furnished. Throughout the year, there are villas and golf villas for rent. Farchette and Hanley Realtors handle rentals. ☎ (800) 323-7241. The course is perfectly maintained and its greens are lush, but well-trimmed. The 6,909 yards (par 72) are spread through a valley, amid streams, lakes and swaying palm trees. Mr. Jones called the 12th hole here one of his finest achievements. At this writing, greens fees for 18 holes are $104 per person. The charge for the cart is $25. You can rent clubs for $30.

There is a well-equipped pro shop for rentals and a lesson or two. The pro shop and restaurant are perched atop a hill overlooking the course and the nearby ruins of slave quarters from the old estate. These have been rebuilt. ☎ (340) 778-5638 at least 24 hours in advance to set a tee time.

Another beautiful course, perhaps less difficult to play, is at the **Buccaneer Hotel**. The 18-hole course takes players over rolling hills (it was once a sugar plantation) and right down to the water's edge. Guests at the Buccaneer have a special rate, but non-guests are welcome. Ask about golf package tours that are available off-season. Rates here run a bit less than those at Carambola. Carts are available, but players can walk the course. Reserve tee times 48 hours in advance. Greens fees of $60 per person include cart rental. ☎ (340) 712-2144.

The Reef is a nine-holer laid out over 3,100 yards of precisely groomed greens on Teague Bay, East End. There is a driving range and pro shop. Greens fees here are $16 for nine holes and $25 if you go round twice. Cart fees are $16 ($24 for 18 holes). There are weekly rates for unlimited golf time. There are also tennis courts here. Duggan's Reef Res-

taurant is very popular both for lunch and dinner. To reserve tee time, ☎ (340) 773-8844.

Tennis



There are over 50 tennis courts on the island, many all-weather and often they can be lit for night play. If your hotel doesn't have courts, you can certainly play elsewhere.

Carambola Golf Club has a terrific tennis facility. There are four clay courts that can be lighted. Pro shop and lessons. Fees. ☎ 778-5638.

Hotel on the Cay has three courts. You will have to watch your lobs here or your ball drowns. ☎ 773-2035.

Buccaneer Hotel has eight courts and two can be lighted. Pro shop and lessons. Fees, per person, per hour. ☎ 773-2100, ext. 736.

The Reef Club has two courts. Call in advance. Fees per hour. ☎ 773-8844.

Tamarind Reef Hotel has two grass courts that can be lighted. ☎ 773-4455.

Club St. Croix Beach & Tennis Resort has three lighted deco-turf courts. ☎ 773-4800.

There are public courts in both Christiansted and Frederiksted.

Horseback Riding



Paul and Jill's Equestrian Stables at Sprat Hill is run by Jill Hurd and her husband Paul. Their rides are like scenic tours as they follow trails through the rainforest and along the hills of the West End. Bring your camera. Beginners will get instruction on the trail. You should make reservations at least one day in advance (more in high season), for groups are limited. Call from 9 am to 5 pm. ☎ 772-2880 or www.paulandjills.com.

Equus Rides, in Cane Bay, takes you on rides along the north shore of St. Croix. ☎ 778-0933.

Hiking



The **St. Croix Environmental Association** offers guided hiking tours of the island. A different location is featured daily. Among them are Salt River National Park, Mount Victory and the semi-tropical rainforest and Butler Bay. Hikes start at 9 am and last for 2½ hours. Reservations are required. ☎ 773-1989.

Caribbean Adventure Tours offers eco-minded hikes to learn about the island's culture, history and ecology en route. Hikes along Annaly Bay and Jack and Isaac's Bay are especially popular. Reservations are required. ☎ 778-1522.

Spa Services & Fitness Centers



A great way to wind down after a day of snorkeling or scuba diving is to head to a spa for some tender loving care. Massages, body wraps, nail and hair care, as well as more extensive therapies are readily available.

The Hideaway Spa at the Buccaneer Hotel is a fine choice. Aromatherapy massages, facials and custom body wraps are offered. The spa is quite luxurious, with its own pool and sauna. ☎ (340) 712-2149.

Organic Skin Boutique concentrates on facials, including crystal-free microdermabrasion, and uses natural products such as Eminence Organic from Hungary and Korres Essential Oils. Look for them in King's Alley, Christiansted. ☎ (340) 719-7788.

A Body-Axis Massage in Estate Diamond Ruby (near Sunny Isle Shopping Center) offers Swedish-sports massages, trigger joint therapy and shiatsu massages. Thera-

pist/owner Joseph Kaiser is California-trained. He'll come to your resort if you prefer. ☎ (340) 719-1804.

Thai Stretch Therapy at Estate Richmond offers body wraps, Bio cleanse foot baths, LaStone Therapy (with alternating hot and cold stones), as well as pilates, are offered here or at your hotel. ☎ (340) 771-0399.

Family Sports and Fitness Center, part of a large fitness complex at Beeston Hall, has a 25-meter pool for lap swimming, a state-of-the art weight room, cardio equipment and a sauna/steam room. ☎ (340) 778-5144.



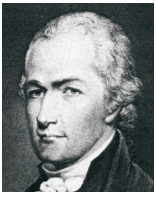
Sightseeing

A Walking Tour of Christiansted

The best way to feel the beat of a city is to walk through its streets. Leave yourself at least one hour to stroll through the wedge of streets and alleys near King's Wharf. These, once the heart of the Danish capital, are lined with shops and hotels inside colonial buildings and in tree-lined courtyards. The National Park Service has preserved the area, and five specific buildings within it, as a historical site.

Make your first stop **The Scalehouse** on King's Wharf. You'll spot the yellow building by the cannon in front of it. This building from the mid-1800s was used to weigh and inspect imports and exports. It's now occupied by the **Virgin Islands National Parks Office.** Stop in for a free map of the area. Diagonally across the wharf (now used for parking) is the **Old Danish Customs House**, started in 1751 and completed in 1830. Customs were collected here and it later served as post office and library.

Alexander Hamilton



Note the plaque to Alexander Hamilton near the bandstand. Born on the nearby island of Nevis (British), young Hamilton lived in St. Croix from the time he was eight until he left for the colonies at the age of 16. The building at the head of King's Alley is where he worked as a clerk.

Fort Christiansvaern, painted a deep yellow with white trim, has been restored to the way it looked in 1820. Stop at the Visitor's Center just inside the entrance door and pick up a yellow pamphlet, which will guide you. Each area is carefully marked with corresponding numbers and arrows. The brick used to build the fort and its walkways was a ship's ballast. Never engaged in battle, the fort served as a military garrison and a police station. It contains punishment cells (for disruptive slaves), dungeons, officers' quarters and a recreation room. Climb to the water battery overlooking the harbor with its cannon still in place. Great spot for photos.



The $3 entrance fee to the Fort Museum is also valid for the Steeple Building Museum.

Cross Hospital Street at Company Street. **The Steeple Building** housed the island's first Lutheran Church, which opened in 1753. The steeple was added 50 years later. It has since served as a bakery, hospital and school. A small but interesting museum with Indian artifacts and information about life on the plantations operates here now. Open from 9 am-4 pm weekdays. Directly across Company Street, the **Danish West Indies & Guinea Co. Warehouse** will soon open as a Slavery Museum.

Visit the old **Charte House** (Danish Manor). It served as a map-making center for sailors in the trading ship era. Nicely

restored. Continue strolling along Company Street. At Queen Cross Street, you'll see the outdoor market.

The red-roofed building is located in **Christian "Shan" Hendricks Square**. Fruits, vegetables and local handicrafts are sold here now, but the most interesting feature is the cacophony of local patois and English spoken by the vendors. Pick up some mangos or genips to nibble as you continue down King Cross Street, to King Street. The town's new Public Library is here. Turn right to the **Lutheran Church**, built in the 1740s as a Dutch Reform Church.



The Tourist Office is across the street from the market.

Government House, an impressive tan and white building that served as the residence of the governor until the islands were purchased by the US, is open to the public. Highly polished wooden floors and fine 18th- and 19th-century furnishings are on display in the center section. The house, acquired in several stages, has recently been renovated. The project took four years. You are now in the heart of the shopping district. Head down King's Alley to the waterfront for a drink or to browse.

A Walking Tour of Frederiksted



Start your walk through historic Frederiksted by stopping into the **Customs House** on Strand Street (waterfront). The **Virgin Island Visitor's Bureau** adjacent to the pier will give you a map of the area. Head to **Fort Frederik** on the waterfront, named for King Frederik V of Denmark and Norway. The date 1760 is inscribed over its gate. In this fort Gov. Van Scholten signed the order freeing the slaves. Walk toward town along Strand Street, a lovely promenade with arcaded buildings and sitting areas. Much of Frederiksted was burned to the ground during a labor dispute and Victorian buildings were built atop the Danish brick walls that re-

mained intact. Look for these strange hybrids as you walk through town. The **Victoria House** on Strand Street near Market Street was a residence built in the late 17th century. It is a perfect example of the "new architecture."

Continue along Strand Street to Queen Cross. The **Old Library** was in the building that has bells in the staircase. The building was once owned by the Bell family. **Cumberland Castle** on the next corner is another lovely old building. Turn left on Queen Street to the **Apothecary Hall**. The two-story building has the town's most unusual architecture. Two blocks away, on your right, is the **Market**, which has been here since 1751.

The town houses a half-dozen historic churches that you might care to explore. **St. Paul's Anglican Church** has been restored. It's on Prince and King Cross Streets.

There are several points of interest near Frederiksted. They are detailed below.

Seeing the Rest of St. Croix

The Virgin Islands Tourist Bureau has several pamphlets that outline car tours exploring different parts of St. Croix. Each lasts an hour or two and is simple to follow. Stop into the tourist offices on Company Street and on Strand Street in Christiansted for maps. If you choose not to follow a mapped tour, you can get a feel for the island by driving from Christiansted to Frederiksted. Drive along the northern road, which passes posh residential areas, exclusive condominiums, lovely beaches, the Carambola Golf Course and the rainforest, before descending into Frederiksted. Return along Centerline Road making a stop at Whim Great House.

St. Croix Heritage Trail

This granddaddy of all driving trails was completed in the spring of 2000. It traverses the entire 28-mile length of St. Croix, linking Frederiksted and Christiansted and the

lovely coastal areas. It follows modernized 18th-century roads and touches on historic attractions, recreational areas, local arts and crafts, churches, scenic views and St. Croix's African-Caribbean heritage. Brown and white Heritage Trail road signs (marked by a sugar mill) guide you along the route. Pick up the Heritage Trail brochure before planning your trip. You can divide the trail into several smaller excursions.

A few of our favorite stops follow.

Whim Great House

As you pass the stone gateposts and mailbox which lead from Centerline Road into this restored estate, it's as if you've slipped back in time. These gateposts and another set nearer the house were brought here from other parts of the island, as were many of the furnishings and implements. However, all were common in the early 1800s. They have been donated by private families and brought from Government House. The St. Croix Landmarks Society has done an absolutely marvelous job restoring not only the house, but the plantation grounds as well. An added treat is the **museum**, located behind the main building.

Young high school and college students act as guides through the Great House. They are well-versed in its history and remember an astonishing number of facts about each item within it. They are extremely polite and anxious that you enjoy your visit.

The estate was bought in 1794 by a wealthy man-about-town, Christopher MacEvoy. He constructed the **Great House** shortly thereafter. There are two unusual features about the house. Because MacEvoy was a bachelor, there is only one bedroom, a rare situation, and he insisted upon sinking the basement into the ground and surrounding it with dry moat rather than building it on a raised basement. Even today, papers stored in the basement do not mold.

Each room has some outstanding furnishings. In the salon, the desk was made of Cruzan wood in Denmark and the chandeliers once hung in Frederiksted's Lutheran Church. The four-poster bed once belonged to an island governor and the planter's box in the bedroom is the forerunner of an attaché case.



The 1685 oak wainscott chair in the foyer entrance is the only original piece left in the house. It was found in storage in the basement.

Beyond the Great House is the tiny **bath house**, which had a wooden floor, and the toilets were located downwind, on the western side. Next to that is the **museum**, with a rotating collection of memorabilia and artifacts of the era. The smithie shop and tools used by the slaves to plant and harvest the cane make interesting exhibits.

The **cookhouse** is extremely interesting, since it contains utensils used in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Note the water purifier and the ovens, which could roast, bake and boil all at the same time. **Apothecary Hall**, with an intact collection of over 250 bottles and jars and original equipment, was a recent gift to Whim.

Continue along the path to the cane field where you'll see an **1856 steam engine** and set of crushers. It was brought to St. Croix from Scotland. The **animal mill** was operated by harnessing oxen, mules or horses to the poles and leading them around in circles as slaves fed cane beneath the rollers. The **windmill** was added later. It was bought in Nevis and reconstructed here when not a single working windmill stood on St. Croix.

The St. Croix Landmarks Society hopes to eventually raise enough money to rebuild the factory where the juices were boiled down into molasses to make sugar. You can help by buying gift items at the **gift shop** in the Great House. An attractive store, it sells reproductions of items used in the colonial period and souvenirs as well. Whim Great House is open

10-4, except Sunday. Modest entrance fee. Allow at least 45 minutes to visit. ☎ 772-0598, www.stcroixlandmarks.com.

St. George Village Botanical Garden

The gardens were developed around a 16-acre estate, which included the ruins of a 19th-century sugar cane village. You'll see parts of the great house, the factory where rum was made, a lime kiln, a stone dam, blacksmith and saddlemakers shops, the bakery and a cemetery. Be sure to see the historic garden where cassava, sweet potatoes, corn and other crops grown here before Columbus are cultivated. The entrance road off Centerline Road (about four miles from Frederiksted) is lined by an impressive row of towering royal palms. You will be amazed at the flora and tropical vegetation that grows on St. Croix, especially if you've driven to Point Udall (East End), which is so dry that cactus grows there rather than palm trees. The Gardens open at 7:30 and close at 3:30 daily. Fee. ☎ 692-2874.

The Rain Forest

The island offers tremendous variety in vegetation. The eastern tip of the island is arid and desert-like. Cactus is the dominant vegetation. In the northwest section of the island there is a tropical rain forest. It covers 15 acres, much of it private property. You can drive through part of the forest on Route 76, which is paved. The towering mahogany, kapok and yellow cedar trees are intertwined at their peaks and thick vines combine to block the sunshine. The ground cover is lush, sprinkled with wild lilies and other flowers. You'll see wild parakeets and mountain doves. To explore the rain forest more intensely, you can follow Route 763, but it is unpaved and deeply rutted. If you don't have a four-wheel-drive vehicle, you might consider hiking this path, or joining a horseback trip along it. There are streams running through here, with clear running water that is very cold.

Lawaetz Museum & Walking Trail

The museum, a five-minute drive from Frederiksted, is a stop on the Heritage Trail. Located in Little La Grange, a tranquil wooded valley, this 19th-century West Indian great house is authentically furnished just as it was at the beginning of the 20th century. The Danish-American Lawaetz family has owned and farmed this estate since 1896. Your guide will likely be a family member. The rooms are filled with locally crafted furniture, antiques, historic photographs and island memorabilia. Equally interesting are the tropical gardens and shady orchards that surround the main house. Still an operating farm, herbs, fruits and vegetables are grown here.

A new addition, the two-mile walking trail, is marked by interpretive signs. Brochures are also available. The self-guided walk explores the unique trees in the area. The museum hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10-4. Closed on major holidays. Admission fee. ☎ 772-1539.

Salt River & Columbus Landing

Visit the only documented landing site (in the US) of Christopher Columbus and his fleet in 1493. A small marker is at the site. Salt River Bay National Park houses an old earthworks fort, an Indian ceremonial ball field and burial grounds.



There are guided nature walks through the rain forest, in Salt Bay River National Park and along beaches on St. Croix's East End. Check with the St. Croix Environmental Association for schedules, reservations and rates. ☎ 773-1989 or visit their office in Apothecary Hall, Christiansted.

St. Croix Leap

An organization that uses woods of the island to make art projects and furniture. Nice to visit. Two miles from Frederiksted along Route 76 (Mahogany Road) in the rain forest. Open Mon.-Fri. 8 am-5 pm; Sat. 10-4:30. ☎ 772-0421.

Point Udall

The easternmost point in the United States was named for the former Secretary of the Interior. It has stunning sea vistas and a hiking trail to remote beaches on Jack and Isaac Bays.

Shop Till You Drop



Christiansted boasts a surprisingly large number of shops. That is not immediately obvious, however, for so many of them are secreted in tiny alleys and behind other shops. If you are an indefatigable shopper, you will enjoy ferreting them out. Because they are rarely crowded, you can really browse, ask questions and be assured of excellent service.

Shops on St. Croix combine the features of those on St. Thomas and St. John. There are branch stores of those in Charlotte Amalie selling cameras, hi-fi equipment, crystal, china, linen and jewelry at duty-free prices. Customs regulations permit visitors to the USVI to return with $1,200 in goods duty-free, rather than the usual $400, and there are other favorable provisions regarding liquor. Shopping is an important part of many vacationers' plans. There are also many craft shops run by young artisans who seem to have migrated south from Cape Cod. They are a talented group, but without great staying power. Their "shops" (usually space in a larger store) open for one season and then they fold up and move on, to be replaced by others.

Credit cards are accepted at the established shops,, but rarely by the artisans. Shops are typically open from 10 am-5 pm, Mon-Fri. They close at 1 pm on Sat.

Orientation

Christiansted



Strand Street is a good place to start. It is partially closed to traffic, which permits shoppers to stroll from shop to shop and along three shopping alleys that connect Strand Street to the Waterfront. You can spend hours exploring Pan Am Pavilion, the Caravelle Arcade and King's Alley. Their small boutiques feature island handicrafts, clothing and small restaurants.

King Street's covered promenade shades some unusual stops and **Company Street** has a half-dozen fascinating shops as well.

Gallows Bay, to the east of Christiansted, has a mini-mall with some unusual shops and other shops have relocated there.

Frederiksted

Frederiksted's handful of shops are located on **Strand Street** near the cruise ship dock.

We'll focus on those spots that have been here for years. You can ferret out the craft shops as you stroll along the streets listed above.

Christiansted

Gifts & Art

Many Hands in the Pan Am Pavilion is a personal favorite. It sells Virgin Island handicrafts exclusively. Even in

mid-summer, a Christmas tree completely decorated holds center court here. The ceramic ornaments, made by local craftspeople, depict island life. Many have become collectors' items. Do your Xmas shopping here and save – some ornaments are only $5.95. Owner Anne Castruccio said, "The tree pays the rent." Other good values are the original watercolor prints, some already matted.

Karma In the Courtyard on Company Street is a funky gift shop set in a lovely courtyard. Locally made incense and oils, jewelry, bath and body products and even artworks make thoughtful gifts. Tapestries and bags are also unusual finds.

St. Croix Landmarks Museum Store in Apothecary Hall on Company Street is a treasure trove of Caribbean maps, locally made arts, crafts and historic photos. Also sold are home accessories and colonial plantation reproductions. The branch at Whim Plantation, near Frederiksted, is also fun to explore.

Tradewinds Shop, on King Street (near Government House), is a branch shop of one in Charlotte Amalie. Items sold are typical of the Caribbean, such as larimar jewelry and coral carvings as well as Naot sandals and stained glass.

Baci and **Baci Duty Free** are adjoining shops on Strand Street at Queen Cross. The duty free shop stocks fine wines and liquors, which they'll pack for transport home. There's a walk-in cigar humidor. Baci sells fine jewelry, Lladro figurines, Limoges and crystal, as well as designer sunglasses.

Soaps & Scents at Queen Cross Street is an attractive source for natural handcrafted soaps and bath and beauty products.

Steele's Smokes & Sweets in the Pan Am Pavilion offers a large assortment of cigar brands in their walk-in humidor and an even larger selection of homemade fudge, chocolates and candies from all over the world.

Memories of St. Croix on Company Street sells local art and handicrafts. It is staffed by the artists themselves.

Glass, weavings, Christmas ornaments, porcelain and mahogany woodwork are among the items sold.

Mitchell-Larsen Studio is next door. It is the working studio of two artists, who produce glassware, picture frames, bowls and other items.

Royal Poinciana on Strand Street is filled with Caribbean-made specialties. Great spices, condiments, soaps, bath gels, art from Haiti and gourmet coffees. All make great gifts.

Folk Art Traders on Strand Street is a Caribbean gallery that displays the work of local artists in copper and ceramics. There are also wood sculptures, Christmas ornaments and larimar and amber jewelry.

Jewelry

Sonya's, the oldest jewelry store on the island, is home to the lovely island hook bracelet and all the jewelry in the shop, whether silver or 14, 18 or 24K gold, is made to order. Her shop is #1 on Company Street.

IB Designs, also on Company Street, showcases the work of local artist/metalsmith Whealan Massicott. IB (Island Boy) features his handcrafted jewelry in sterling silver and 14K and 18K gold. Each piece is unique and creative. Closed July 1-Oct 1.

Beaden, in the newer and larger space in Caravelle Arcade, offers island-designed beaded jewelry. You can buy loose beads or a bead kit if you are creative. Some items incorporate vintage beads and semi-precious stones. Most of the stones are imported.

Nelthropp and Low, in the Pan Am Pavillion, is a family-owned shop (formerly the Gold Shop) that has been here since 1970. They specialize in designing original jewelry. Their designs are therefore not sold elsewhere. Sit down with a designer, pick out stones or old coins that you like and

a setting will be designed for you. Designer watches are sold here as well.

Crucian Gold, on the Waterfront, is the studio and shop of Crucian jeweler Brian Bishop. His most famous piece is the Crucian Bracelet, which can be designed in either gold or silver. Variations make it a great gift for a variety of occasions.

Jewelweed at King Street and Queen Cross is another special find. Many jewelry shops are cautious about allowing customers to handle or try on the pieces. Not so here. Owner Anne Shultz and her staff encourage trying on and excel at answering questions. Wedding and engagement rings are house specialties, as are items with colored gemstones.

Tropical Clothing & Beachwear

Violette Boutique in the Caravelle Arcade is St. Croix's foremost fragrance shop. All the designer names are here. Cosmetics, Gucci watches and Fendi handbags too.

From the Gecko on Queen Cross Street offers an eclectic collection of tropical clothing for men and women. Original silks, handpainted clothing and unique jewelry. Colorful and contemporary.

Kicks on Company Street is a fashion boutique that sells fine leathers for both men and women. Shoes, handbags, backpacks, belts and travel accessories are fun to browse.

Pacific Cotton on Strand Street is St. Croix's most fashionable ladies boutique. Its resortwear in cotton and silk is often in pastel shades.

Hotheads in King's Alley has a huge selection of swimwear, pareos, beach bags, accessories and, of course, hats – to cover "hot heads."

Purple Papaya in Pan Am Pavilion is your best bet for T-shirts, sweatshirts, Hawaiian shirts and kid's swimwear. Liquor too.

Gallows Bay

Karavan West Indies is a great gift shop. They have original art and prints that are sold framed and unframed, as well as music boxes, Italian dinnerware and designer jewelry.

Rare Finds, open Wed through Sat, has a mix of collectibles and gift items.

Undercover Bookstore has a good selection of both hardcover and paperback books – bestsellers and general stock.

Up Island on East End Road is a fabulous store selling the Fresh Produce clothing line, which is perfect for summer wear. They have tropical hats, shoes, accessories and handbags, as well as the boldly designed jewelry by Hope Gibson.

Frederiksted

Island Webe on Strand Street has rain forest products, plus Caribbean rum balls, mocko jumbie dolls, T-shirts and other island things.

The Garden Gate Gift Shop at St. George Village Botanical Garden offers unique gift items many with a garden theme, local sauces, jellies and fragrances, wind chimes and paper products. This is a delightful shop to browse in.

Best Places to Stay



St. Croix's lodgings are a heterogeneous lot. They include posh resorts scattered on beautiful beachfronts around the island, as well as condominium complexes and small picturesque in-town hotels.

The maze of streets and alleys that make up the historic quarter of Christiansted is home to a score of small, lively hostelries, all within easy walking distance of one another and the restaurants, shops and night spots in town. Quiet Frederiksted has only a handful of acceptable places to stay,

but nearby there are cottage resorts and some charming inns and B&Bs.

The island's rugged north shore houses the lovely Carambola Beach Resort, as well as several smaller resorts and condominium complexes. The Buccaneer, a fine hotel spread over 300 tropical acres and with an 18-hole golf course, is on the island's east end. There are many coves, bays and islets on this shore and several good dining spots. The island's southern shore is virtually undeveloped, serene and stunning. Home to the Divi Carina Bay Resort and its casino, this coast is slated for condo development. Whether you choose to stay in town or outside, a rental car will enhance your experience.

With only a few exceptions, St. Croix's hotels are family-run affairs and even the larger resorts have island management. The owners and their children are always in attendance, which gives you a homey feeling. While accommodations vary in style and location, prices are anchored at the moderate-to-expensive level. We found several small inns and B&Bs that are inexpensive, particularly in the off-season.

Virtually all hotels are air-conditioned, but most retain ceiling fans to catch those cooling trade winds. You might find an energy surcharge on your bill each day for the air-conditioner and TV. An 8% government tax is standard on all hotels bills. High-season rates run 20-30% higher than in low season, which runs from May 1 through mid-November.

St. Croix is always short on water and signs will remind you of that fact as you brush your teeth. It is unusual to find a bathtub on the island. Even in the most elegant hotels, showers are *de rigueur*.

St. Croix Hotel Price Scale

To give you a ballpark figure to budget with, we have devised the scale below. It is based on the price of a double room in high season (Dec 15 to April 30). It does not take hotel amenities into account. At other times you can expect to pay 25% less. Inquire about special rates as part of a travel package. All hotels described take major credit cards, unless specifically noted.

Deluxe	$350+
Expensive	$251-$350
Moderate	$150-$250
Inexpensive	under $150



An **8% government tax** will be added to your rate each night. The resorts add a **$20 resort fee**.

Resorts East of Christiansted

Hospital Gade (near the Old Customs House) becomes Route #82 (East End Road) as it heads east out of Christiansted. At first the area is suburban, with shopping arcades, a beach and even an old fort. But once you pass The Buccaneer Hotel (two miles), it becomes quite rural. You'll see small homes enclosed by picket fences, drying laundry, goats and cows munching on grass. Soon you'll notice a change in the vegetation. This end of the island is much drier and cactus replaces the tropical flowering plants. There are resorts, beaches and marinas all along the northern shore.

THE BUCCANEER BEACH & GOLF RESORT
5007 Estate Shoys #7
St. Croix, USVI 00824
☎ (340) 773-2100, www.thebuccaneer.com
Reservations: (800) 255-3881
Deluxe

A fine hotel, The Buccaneer has been an island tradition since the Armstrong family opened it in 1948, with 11 rooms. Constructed around buildings that date to 1653, the original manor's thick walls and graceful arches are still visible in the French Wing. The Armstrongs have renovated and expanded the property over the years and it has grown into a self-contained resort with 150 rooms on 300 acres, three beaches, an 18-hole golf course, eight tennis courts, a fitness center/health spa and shopping arcade.

Because the resort has been built in stages, there are several types of accommodations and rates vary. Deluxe oceanfront rooms span the area above the beaches. These rooms have sitting areas with large picture windows and spacious patios. Deluxe ocean-view rooms also have spacious patios and they are set in the main building and on the hillside. Family cottages and suites have a master bedroom and a sitting area that converts for sleeping at night. A small number of standard and superior rooms in the main building face the mountains and golf course. Slightly smaller than the other accommodations, they are moderate in price. All rooms have full baths, air-conditioners and ceiling fans, cable TVs, hair dryers and irons and ironing boards.

The grounds and all the facilities are well maintained and the service provided is what one expects at first-class hotels. The golf course (18 holes) covers 6,423 acres and is a par 71. There is a pro shop and club rentals are available, as are carts. There are greens fees even for guests. Guests also pay a modest fee to play tennis. There are two freshwater pools, but most guests head to one of three beach strips. Cutlass Cove Beach has a full watersports center where windsurfing

boards, sailboats and snorkel gear are available. Lounge chairs and floats too.

Landlubbers can jog or walk the two-mile exercise path that winds through the property or head to the fitness center, where the equipment is first-rate. To wind down, head to the health spa for a massage, seaweed wrap or manicure.

The restaurants, the gourmet **Brass Parrot** and al fresco **Terrace**, are in the main building. Italian specialties are featured at the Brass Parrot, while the fare is continental with West Indian flair at the Terrace. Casual chic is the norm at dinner. Informal dining options at beach and poolside as well.

The Beach Shack will arrange trips to Buck Island, scuba trips and sport fishing jaunts for you. There is a shuttle bus to Christiansted, two miles west, several times a day.

CHENAY BAY BEACH RESORT
Box 24600, Christiansted
St. Croix, USVI 00824
☎ (340) 773-2918, www.chenaybay.com
Reservations: (800) 548-4457
Expensive

Looking for a total change of pace? Want to lounge on your private porch with your nose in the latest Grisham mystery or build sand castles with your kids on a pristine beach that you have all to yourself? Then consider Chenay Bay Beach Resort, an unusual resort that combines housekeeping options with resort amenities. The combination, while not everyone's cup of tea, is great for families and self-starters.

Fifty individual cottages built in traditional West Indian style, a few steps from a sandy beach or perched on a gentle hillside, are surrounded by hibiscus and old genip trees. Each air-conditioned cottage has a well-equipped kitchen, private bath and tastefully furnished living room/bedroom areas. Each has a terrace. There are barbecue setups nearby.

The cottage will be spotless when you arrive and the staff will tidy up, replace towels and clean the bathroom daily. There is a small charge for a full cleaning and change of linen.

Chenay Bay's owners provide an unobtrusive resort atmosphere, with tennis courts, a watersports center that has snorkel gear and kayaks, and special event evenings at the casual Island House beachfront restaurant. Those without a car can hop the morning shopping shuttle. An evening shuttle runs several nights each week.



The **Cruzan Kid program** for kids four-12 is great fun. Inquire when you make reservations.

TAMARIND REEF HOTEL
5001 Tamarind Reef, Christiansted
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-4455, www.usvi.net/hotel/tamarind
Reservations: (800) 619-0014
Moderate

Tamarind Reef has a lovely beachfront location. It was enlarged and renovated after Hugo, but it is still small enough to offer its guests personal service. Its 46 rooms are scattered along the property in several two-story buildings surrounded by coconut palms and sea grape trees. Upper-floor rooms have balconies that look over Green Cay Island and beyond it to Buck Island. Amenities include refrigerators, air-conditioners and ceiling fans, in-room safes and cable TV. Lower-level rooms have patio sitting areas and many have kitchen facilities in addition to the amenities above. The palm-lined beach fronts Tamarind Reef, which is fun for snorkelers and the watersports center has gear, includingwindsurfing boards and kayaks. There is a large pool and both tennis and croquet courts.

Tamarind Reef shares a cove with the Green Cay Marina (Green Cay is the tiny island offshore) and scuba and snor-

kel trips leave from the docks there. The dockside **Galleon Restaurant** serves excellent continental fare.



Continental breakfast is served at poolside.

North Shore Resorts

The north coast of St. Croix, west of Christiansted, is rugged and has some of the island's best beaches and exclusive residential areas. Accommodations here include both hotels and condominium complexes. Several selections are located off Route #75, which is the main road heading west out of Christiansted, while others, farther from town, are along Route #80 (North Shore Road), which hugs the coast. Two premier hotels on the north shore are Carambola Beach Resort and Cormorant Beach Club.

CARAMBOLA BEACH RESORT

Box 3031, Kingshill
St. Croix, USVI 00810
☎ (340) 778-3800, www.carambolabeach.com
Reservations: (800) 503-8760
Deluxe

The road heading west from Christiansted hugs the northern coast, climbing tree-laden hillsides and curving down to the shore. It passes a few small resorts, a lovely beach and some residential areas. It comes as a surprise in this undeveloped area to see a mass of peaked red roofs following the curve of a long beach. Carambola, opened in 1987 as a Rockresort, was totally destroyed by Hurricane Hugo and was closed for several years. Now under new management, the hotel has regained its former prominence. It is a modern resort with spacious beautifully landscaped grounds and first-rate facilities. Yet it is faithful to island tradition. At different times, the island was settled by Danes, Dutch, French, Spanish and English. Carambola, incorporating the design of a Caribbean fishing village, uses the red corru-

gated roof of the Dutch, rafted Spanish ceilings, French louvered doors and wide English porches on the cottages that house 157 rooms and on the public areas. **The Great House**, which houses two restaurants, shops, a library and deli, is the center of guest activity. Its most prominent feature is a striking two-story bell tower with six Solari wind chimes that are in constant motion.

Guest rooms are spacious, with separate sleeping and sitting areas, oversized stall showers, a walk-in closet and a delightful screened porch that faces either the sea or the gardens. Traditional touches include authentic Brazilian walnut paneling, handcarved headboards and dressers.

Breakfast and lunch, in the informal **Saman** dining room, are buffet-style. Dinner, a more formal service, is served in the **Mahogany Room**. The **Cruzan Grill** deli is a good alternative if you prefer continental breakfast or an overstuffed sandwich for lunch. Guests and non-guests head to Carambola on Friday evenings for their famed **Pirate's Buffet**. Lots of great food, including barbecued meats and fish, fresh salads, tropical fruits and fabulous desserts plus a West Indian show with steel bands, fire-walkers, mocko-jumbis and reggae and calypso bands. Make reservations.

Many guests are lured to Carambola by the nearby 18-hole golf course. The course was built 30 years ago, but the pro shop and restaurant and tennis facility are all new.

The beach, one of St. Croix's loveliest, is on Davis Bay. It has a good reef for snorkeling and rolling waves. There is also a large pool and Jacuzzi. There are four tennis courts on the hotel's 28 acres.

A shuttle bus connects the hotel with the golf course and with Christiansted several times each day, but a car would be a big plus here.

CORMORANT BEACH CLUB
4126 La Grande Princesse
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 778-8920, www.cormorantbeachclub.com
Reservations: (800) 548-4460
Expensive

This 12-acre resort is located on Pelican Beach in a residential suburb, just three miles north of Christiansted.

Pelican Beach Hotel occupied this spot until 1986 when Wally and Robbie Bregman, a dynamic couple, bought it and molded it into a chic resort. Hurricane Hugo forced the Bregmans to sell the hotel but the new management team has maintained the casually elegant style.



Though the owners are gay, the hotel draws both gay and straight guests.

The beach is lined with towering palms, and hammocks are strung between many of them. There is a fine reef just offshore and the hotel has a good-sized, oddly shaped pool, as well as tennis courts.

The 40 rooms are in two bi-level buildings along the beach. They are large, with a king-sized bed or two double beds and bold floral prints and cane furniture. Rooms, all with terraces or patios, face the beach. There are four penthouse suites as well.

The poolside restaurant serves all three meals and, while the menu is limited, it focuses on fresh fish, grilled meats and Caribbean specialties. Local bands play at the Caribbean barbecue buffet and there is live entertainment several nights a week.

HIBISCUS BEACH HOTEL
4131 La Grande Princesse
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-4042, www.1hibiscus.com
Reservations: (800) 442-0121
Expensive

Sharing the 1,600 ft. of Pelican Beach with Cormorant Beach Club is the newer Hibiscus Beach Hotel. Similar in style and size, Hibiscus has 37 rooms in two-story buildings that have patios or terraces facing the beach. Upstairs rooms have great views. Rooms are air-conditioned, but also have ceiling fans. They have kitchenettes and cable TVs. There is a good-sized swimming pool on the grounds.

The **H2O Bistro** near the beach is one of the most popular dining spots on the island (see *Best Places to Eat*).

CANE BAY REEF CLUB
Box 1407, Kingshill
St. Croix, USVI 00851
☎ (340) 778-2966, www.canebay.com
Moderate

A mini-hotel, Cane Bay Reef was totally renovated in 1990. There are only nine two-room suites, and each has a bedroom with twin beds, a living room, fully equipped kitchen and a private terrace. Rooms are air-conditioned, but you may not need it since ceiling fans and the breeze coming in over the water keeps things comfortable. Maid service is available for an extra charge.

The Reef has a 40-ft. pool and Cane Bay Beach, an easy stroll away, has good swimming and snorkeling. Outdoor barbecue grills are available for cooking and the bar is open for Happy Hour from 5-8:30 pm daily. If you prefer not to cook (and who doesn't), you can head to **Off the Wall Beach Bar**, which has a spectacular setting overlooking the water. Dinner, served nightly, features fresh seafood, steak and pork, plus great desserts.

THE WAVES AT CANE BAY
Box 1749, Kingshill
St. Croix, USVI 00850
☎ (340) 773-1805, www.canebaystcroix.com
Moderate

Twelve efficiency apartments and a small house share Cane Bay with the Reef. The apartments, in two double-storied white buildings, are individually furnished in island style and have ceiling fans. Screened porches with dining tables, chairs and chaises overlook the sea, and the view is lovely. It is also cool. Ask for a second-floor room, which has high ceilings. You can arrange for maid service. The house is a studio with a dressing room/bath and full kitchen. It has a large deck for sunning and eating. There is a small pool, but most guests head to the beach. A car is a must here. Best for independent types.



There is a **PADI dive shop** on the property.

South Shore Resorts

DIVI CARINA BAY RESORT AND CASINO
25 Estate Turner Hole
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-9700, www.divicarina.com
Reservations: (877) 773-9700
Expensive

St Croix's newest resort is set along a 1,000-ft. sandy strip called Grapetree Beach. It is the only resort on the island's rugged South Shore. The Divi is best known because it is home to the Virgin Islands' only casino, which is too bad because the hotel can certainly stand on its own merits.

Its 125 rooms all have ocean views. Ground-floor rooms have patios on the beach. Rooms are large, the décor is modern, with colorful fabrics, wicker chairs and tables and sitting areas. They have kitchenettes, TVs, VCRs and air-conditioning. There is a watersports center on the beach

and lots of gear to play with. Adjacent to the beach, the pool has a big sundeck and lots of organized activities. A spa and fitness center is also on the beach level.

The **Dockside Market Café** serves all three meals daily, with lots of fish dishes and salads at lunch and dinner. Pizzas are very popular. **The Starlite Grill**, off the lobby, is a more formal restaurant serving continental food.

There are 20 villas across the road that can be rented through the hotel. They have a separate pool. The casino is also across the roadway, within easy walking distance of the hotel (see *After Dark*).

Christiansted

Invariably small, but with deft touches that give each a special character, these hostelries are within a five-block radius of one another and of most restaurants and shops we recommend. Nightlife centers around them as well. No car is needed if you make one of these your headquarters in St. Croix, but keep in mind that there are no beaches in town and cab fares can add up.

KING CHRISTIAN HOTEL
57 King Street, Christiansted
St. Croix, USVI 00824
☎ (340) 773-6330, www.kingchristian.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2012
Moderate

I'm partial to the 38-room King Christian Hotel, an institution here, built during the days of Danish rule. Comfortable rooms are furnished in tropical style with lots of wicker and pastels. Rooms are air-conditioned, with two double beds, ceiling fans, refrigerators and personal safes. From your private terrace, you can sit back and take in the kaleidoscope of color and movement that is Christiansted's harbor.

The King Christian's special brand of hospitality starts at the top and permeates the entire staff. The desk in the postage-stamp lobby is always manned by a friendly face who greets you, inquires about your day and offers tidbits about the island. Conversation around the pool and the small sundeck is conducted in several languages.

HOTEL CARAVELLE
44A Queen Cross Street
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 773-0687, www.hotelcaravelle.com
Reservations: (800) 524-0410
Moderate

Freshly painted in pastel pink with white trim, the Hotel Caravelle has a wonderful location right on the waterfront near Christiansted's restaurants and shops. The recently renovated Caravelle blends old-world service with modern amenities. Its 43 rooms are good-sized and decorated in rattan and colorful prints. Some rooms have king-sized beds, while others have doubles. All are air-conditioned, with dressing areas, cable TVs and refrigerators. Those with harbor views have private terraces. The lobby has white rattan furniture and is partly open-air. **Rum Runners** (see *Best Places to Eat*) serves all three meals at waterside.

KINGS ALLEY HOTEL
57 King's Alley
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 773-0103
Reservations: (800) 843-3574
Moderate-Expensive

This attractive hostelry is part of King's Alley promenade. Filled with shops and restaurants, King's Alley leads from Strand Street to the waterfront. The hotel has undergone several changes. The original 22 rooms in the main building offer good value. They have modern furnishings, king-sized

beds, TVs and small balconies overlooking the marina. The new wing, across the alley, has 12 premium rooms, furnished with mahogany four-poster beds, Mexican tile floors and Indonesian fabrics. French windows open over the courtyard. All rooms are air-conditioned and also have fans. The circular swimming pool has chaise longues and the small bar at poolside opens early and stays open late.

HOTEL ON THE CAY
Box 4020
Christiansted, St. Croix 00822
☎ (340) 773-2035, www.hotelonthecay.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2035
Moderate

This self-contained resort, complete with small beach, is perched on Protestant Cay, a tiny island in the harbor, a three-minute private ferry run from King's Wharf. Using every bit of land on the cay, the hotel is set amid tropical plants, fish-stocked ponds and waterfalls. The 55 rooms are found in several two-story buildings. Upper-floor rooms have terraces, while lowers have patios. Furnishings are quite modern, with beds set on wooden platforms and colorful accessories.

The **Harbormaster Beach Club** serves all three meals and often has beachside barbecues with entertainment.

There are two tennis courts at water's edge (watch those lobs!) and a boot-shaped pool perched above the beach. The Water Sports Shop on the Cay Dock arranges scuba trips as well as excursions to Buck Island. Equipment rentals too.

Guests ride the hotel's ferry free of charge, as do those with dinner or brunch reservations. All others pay a small fee.



Last ferry leaves the cay at 12:30 am weekdays and 1:30 am weekends.

HOLGER DANSKE HOTEL
1200 King Cross Street
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 773-3600, www.bestwestern.com
Reservations: (877) 465-4373
Moderate

Another waterfront choice is the 43-room Holger Danske, part of the Best Western chain. A walkup, it has three floors. The upper-floor rooms have small balconies, many facing the marina. Good-sized bright rooms with twin or double beds are air-conditioned and have TVs. Several are efficiency units. The pool on the second floor is built out over the harbor and the hotel's restaurant is located beneath it.

PINK FANCY HOTEL
27 Prince Street
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 773-8460, www.pinkfancy.com
Reservations: (800) 524-2045
Moderate

One of St. Croix's most charming hotels is an unusual inn lodged in four small buildings, the oldest of which is a Danish townhouse built in 1780. The three others, all enclosing an inner courtyard, were built in 1880. Restored, renovated and very chic, each of the 13 rooms is distinct in size and décor. White walls give the rooms an open, airy feeling, as do the colorful West Indian fabrics and rattan furniture. Each room has an efficiency kitchen, air-conditioner plus ceiling fan, color TV and clock radio. Rooms have island names. "Recovery Hill" is our favorite, with antiques, batiks and a reading table. David and Motasem, your hosts, serve continental breakfast on the patio and drinks are "help yourself" at the Lime Tree Honor Bar.

In & Around Frederiksted

THE FREDERIKSTED HOTEL
442 Strand, Frederiksted
St. Croix, USVI 00840
☎ (340) 772-0500, www.frederikstedhotel.com
Reservations: (800) 595-9519
Inexpensive

The Frederiksted, a 40-room hotel small enough to operate as an inn, is your best bet in this quiet town. Rooms with double- or king-sized beds are furnished in island style, which means colorful fabrics and rattan. Rooms are air-conditioned and most have a harbor view. They have refrigerators and cable TV. Breakfast is served at the poolside patio and so are cocktails and soft drinks. The hotel is near the dock, several restaurants and shops. They will provide free transportation to nearby beaches.

SANDCASTLE ON THE BEACH
127 Estate Smithfield, Frederiksted
St. Croix, USVI 00840
☎ (340) 772-1205
Reservations: (800) 524-2018
Moderate

The 16-unit Sandcastle resort is on a secluded beach, one mile south of Frederiksted. It is a 15-minute walk to town. All the units have been tastefully decorated, have kitchens and are air-conditioned. Most have balconies that face the sea. New arrivals are greeted with a bottle of rum and flowers, and the atmosphere is congenial, with many guests returning annually. The grounds are spotless and well maintained. There is a freshwater pool and a hot tub. The **Beach Bar & Café** serves lunch and dinner, as well as a great Sunday brunch. Lunch offerings are burgers and sandwiches, but dinner fare is gourmet, with pastas, fish and homemade desserts.

 Resort guests here are largely gay.

Inns & B&Bs

VILLA GREENLEAF ON ST. CROIX
Box 675
Christiansted, St. Croix 00821
☎ (340) 719-1958, www.villagreenleaf.com
Reservations (888) 282-1001
Expensive

Located just west of Christiansted atop a rolling hill overlooking historic Salt River Bay and the Caribbean, this lovely inn is a new arrival on the St. Croix scene. The owners also own a luxurious inn in New England and now they've transferred their expertise to a warmer climate. There are only five suites and they are all air-conditioned but also have ceiling fans. Although not identically furnished, look for four-poster beds, rattan and mahogany furniture, colorful local art and a screened porch where breakfast is served. The common living room and library, furnished West Indian-style, has a large satellite TV and VCR/DVD player. There is a sundeck here too. Formerly a private home, the rooms open onto a pool and Jacuzzi. Rates here include a rental car (a must) and breakfast. Afternoon cocktails too. Lovely place to stay.

INN AT PELICAN HEIGHTS
4201 Estate St. John
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 713-8022, (888) 445-9458
www.innatpelicanheights.com
Moderate

This compound, off Route 751, is marked by a flagpole and a white picket fence. In a residential area, the inn has a main house where the owners live and several cottages where five suites are located. The sixth suite is located in the main

house itself. Attractively furnished with white woods, colorful cloths and local art, each suite has a kitchenette, cable TV and a private patio. They are all air-conditioned, but have ceiling fans. Rooms are exceptionally clean and well cared for. Guests congregate in the Great Room for breakfast and there is a large screen TV in the communal library. There is a boat-shaped pool and sun deck. You'll need a car here, but the Estate Princess beach is within walking distance.

HILTY HOUSE INN
2 Hermon Hill
Gallows Bay
☎ (340) 773-2594
Reservations: (800) 524-2026
Expensive

A historic, late 18th-century plantation manor, which Hugh and Jacki Ward have converted into a charming B&B. Each of the six bedrooms is unique, with tasteful furnishings and a private bathroom. There are also one-bedroom cottages for rent on the estate. There is a pool.

THE BREAKFAST HOUSE
18 Queens Cross Street, Christiansted
St. Croix, USVI 00820
(just uphill from the historic district)
☎ (340) 773-7383
Inexpensive

A cozy B&B in a restored 19th-century home overlooking Christiansted Harbor. Each room has a private bath and kitchenette. Rooms are small, clean and comfortable, but basic. Continental breakfast is included.

CARRINGTONS' INN
56 Hermon Hill
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 713-0508, www.carringtonsinn.com
Reservations: (877) 658-0508
Moderate

Claudine and Roger Carrington are your hosts at this charming inn. There are five guest rooms, each with a private bath and either a king- or queen-sized bed, along with lots of other amenities. Breakfast is served on a covered porch.

COTTAGES BY THE SEA
127 A Estate Smithfield
Frederiksted, St. Croix 00840
☎ (340) 772-0495, (800) 323-7252,
www.caribbeancottages.com
Inexpensive

Mixing casual accommodations and a long island history, Cottages By The Sea, was built early in the 20th century by a newly married Cruzian couple. They raised their extended family here and over the years built the West Indian-style cottages and a villa. Many are freestanding, while others are in groups of three. One accommodation is on the second level of the main house. Accommodations are comfortably, if basically furnished, with full kitchens, air conditioners and fans. They have beach-style furniture on private patios where guests can eat or sun themselves. (No food is provided). There is daily maid service.

Guests often gather at the main house, where there is a communal patio and paperback library. Family members are often around as well.



If you prefer a pool to ocean swimming, you can use the adjacent fitness center pool and workout machines. There's a restaurant too. A car is required here.

Villas & Condominiums

A villa or condominium is a great option for families visiting St. Croix. There are quite a few developments where individually owned units are rented by management companies. They are very attractive and have many resort amenities. Some well known condominium developments follow, as well as the most reliable rental offices.

Island Villas represents privately owned condos and villas throughout St. Croix. They arrange maid service and auto rentals. ☎ (800) 626-4512, www.stcroixislandvillas.com.

Caribbean Property Management represents luxurious beachfront homes and condos, with personalized concierge services. ☎ (800) 496-7379, www.enjoystcroix.com.

Vacation St. Croix not only matches your mood to a quaint cottage or a perfect villa, it provisions your selection, arranges a car rental and scuba lessons or a personal chef. ☎ (877) 788-0361, www.vacationstcroix.com.

VILLA MADELEINE
Route 82, Teague Bay
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-4850
Rentals. Teaque Bay Properties, ☎ (800) 237-1959
Expensive

If you are looking for a romantic, luxurious hideaway, head to one of the 43 villas at Villa Madeleine on St. Croix's largely undeveloped east end. This is not a family-friendly resort like those that follow. There are lots of honeymooners and young married guests here. Each of the villas has a full kitchen and a private pool. Only the bedroom is air-conditioned, but ceiling fans keep the cooling tradewinds moving. They are not identically furnished; you'll find bamboo four-poster beds, rattan furniture, rocking chairs, cable TVs and pink marble showers.

The villa at the heart of the resort is an exquisitely restored West Indian plantation Greathouse. It has Asian rugs, plush upholstered furniture and both a billiard room and library. There is also a communal sitting area. There is a tennis court, a bar and restaurant on the grounds and the concierge can make scuba reservations as well as dining reservations. Villa Madeleine is not far from the casino. A car is essential.

CLUB ST. CROIX BEACH & TENNIS RESORT
3280 Estate Golden Rock
St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-4800, (800) 524-2025
www.antillesresorts.com
Moderate

Antilles Resorts, headquartered here, is the premier rental agency for condo resorts in the USVI. The resorts they manage are invariably well maintained and fairly priced.

Club St. Croix is small, with only 54 units in low-rise buildings along an attractive beach strip. All the accommodations are suites. Junior suites have a sleeping alcove and one- and two-bedroom suites. All have kitchens and the larger suites have living/dining areas There are private patios and terraces. All are air-conditioned and daily maid service is provided.

Club St. Croix is a lively spot with an active watersports center, 80-foot pool and three lighted deco-turf tennis courts. There are two casual eateries on the beach, but the most popular dining option here is **Breezez**, the resort's poolside restaurant. It serves lunch and dinner nightly (4-9 pm) and is very popular on Sunday. Brunch is served from 10 am-2 pm.

COLONY COVE CONDOMINIUMS
3200 Estate Golden Rock
Christiansted, St. Croix, USVI 00820
☎ (340) 773-9150
Reservations: (800) 524-2025, www.antillesresorts.com
Expensive

Nestled on the north shore of St. Croix, a 10-minute drive west of Christiansted, Colony Cove is a luxury condominium development. Its four buildings encircle a tropical patio and a freshwater pool. Each of the 60 units has a full living room/dining area, two air-conditioned bedrooms, two baths, a full kitchen, and cable TV. There are tennis courts on the property and the beachfront watersports center has snorkel gear and windsurfing boards.

SUGAR BEACH
3245 Estate Golden Rock
Christiansted, St. Croix 00820
☎ (340) 773-5345, (800) 524-2049, www.sugarbeach.com
Moderate

A condominium complex just 10 minutes from downtown, Sugar Beach has 25 of its 45 apartments for rent. The apartments (from studios to two-bedrooms), all with ocean views, are in one stucco, Spanish-style building built to the curve of the coast. They are centrally air-conditioned, with fully equipped kitchens and the larger apartments have washer/dryers. Maid service is available at extra charge. The apartments have been decorated by their owners and are not uniform.

From your terrace, you'll see the white sandy beach in front of the complex. It's adequate for sunning and relaxed snorkeling. The ruin of an old sugar mill dominates the pool and recreation area across the road. Two Laykold tennis courts and the good-sized pool are the only recreation features. There's no restaurant on the premises.



Sugar Beach is recommended for long stays. A car is an absolute must here.

MILL HARBOUR CONDOMINIUM
3220 Estate Golden Rock
Christiansted, St. Croix
☎ (340) 713-8372, www.stcroixislandconnection.com
Moderate

Mill Harbour, largest and most attractive of these complexes, has 86 units and a flexible number are available for rental at any one time. All the apartments are found in one long white stucco building running perpendicular to the beach. There are three floors; the first- and second-floor apartments have two bedrooms, while those on the third floor have three. All have private terraces facing the attractive moat running behind the building, separating it from the pool and restaurant. All the apartments have been furnished by their owners and are equipped with TVs and blenders.

Beyond the moat is the small beach, better for sunning than swimming, a good-sized pool and a restaurant/cocktail lounge. Mill Harbour has two tennis courts.

Camping

MOUNT VICTORY CAMP
Creque Dam Road
Frederiksted, St. Croix
☎ (866) 772-1651, www.mtvictorycamp.com
Inexpensive (no credit cards)

For a real outdoor Caribbean adventure, stay on Bruce and Mathilde Wilson's farm nestled on eight acres in the rain forest on St. Croix's west end. A peaceful and relaxing retreat, accommodations are in three teak "tents," which stand on raised roof-covered platforms. The two other accommodations are bungalows, including a two-story one that was once a schoolhouse. Each has rudimentary cooking equipment,

with cooking and eating utensils, hot and cold running water and beds. Communal bathrooms, hot showers, campfire cooking equipment and a camp library are available as well. There are also tent campsites, but you'll have to supply the gear. The farm has vegetable and herb gardens, tropical fruit orchards and a live-in tortoise colony. Although the farm appears to be in the middle of nowhere, it is only two miles to Sprat Hall Beach and the Sunset Grill Restaurant. The farm is about 10 minutes from Frederiksted.

Best Places to Eat



Dusk is a lovely time of day in Christiansted. The dazzling sun starts to drop beyond the harbor and the picturesque streets and alleys are bathed in a mellow light. Find yourself a niche on the waterfront promenade or your hotel terrace to savor the hush that settles over the busy marina. Soon, twinkling lights will appear in the town – many of them at small restaurants.

A lot of St. Croix's better restaurants are in hotels, but their menus are not the usual antiseptic fare one expects in hotel dining rooms. These restaurants compete with the island's privately owned eateries (indeed, many of the hotel restaurants are privately run) and they reflect this competitive spirit both in their bills of fare and their ambience.

While the island has a score of restaurants that have been around for years, others pop up for a time and, unfortunately, close as quickly. A new restaurant then occupies the same space within a few weeks.

Please let us know about your favorites so we can include them in the next edition. Send e-mail to comments@hunterpublishing.com or write c/o Hunter Publishing, 30 Campus Drive, Edison NJ 08818.

While there are a few ethnic restaurants, most offer international menus drawing dishes from several sources. This makes for an interesting dining experience. You can start

with conch fritters, a West Indian appetizer, move onto a savory dish of stir fried shrimp with Chinese vegetables and close with lemon mousse.

Unlike St. Thomas, many restaurants are open for both lunch and dinner. Lunch is served from 11 to 3. The most popular dinner hours are 8-9:30 and **dinner reservations are an absolute must**, since restaurants are small and people linger to listen to the entertainment that many restaurants offer.

There are few inexpensive places to eat on St. Croix. One of the reasons for this is that virtually all food is imported and the shipping costs get passed down to you. You can however, eat in the island's finest restaurants and, by prudent selection, stick to a moderate budget.

Guests at **Carambola** and **Buccaneer** "dress" for dinner; otherwise, informality is the key word. "Dress" here means casual chic – not suits and ties. Wear whatever you enjoy. Christiansted's restaurants are all within a five-block rectangle and you can easily walk from one to the other or to the nearby boites. If you choose an out-of-town place and do not have a car, the staff will call a taxi for you.

Frederiksted's dining scene has been revitalized with a spate of interesting restaurants, all near the new pier. Aim for sunset, which is spectacular here.



A few of the upscale restaurants close in September and October to allow for refurbishing and for developing new dishes.

Money Matters



Credit cards are accepted in hotel restaurants and most of the others as well. Check when you make your reservation. Tips are not included in your bill and you should tip as you would on the mainland.

St. Croix Restaurant Price Scale

Based on a three-course dinner (per person): appetizer or soup, main dish, dessert and coffee. Cocktails and wine are extra.

Expensive . . . . . over $45
Moderate . . . . . $35-$45
Inexpensive . . . . . under $35

Christiansted

KENDRICK'S
King Cross Street
☎ (340) 773-9199
Dinner only. Closed Sun
Expensive

As close to a gourmet restaurant as you'll find on St. Croix, Kendrick's is set in a lovely old Danish building, Quin House. You enter through a courtyard that is plant-filled and has a handful of tables. Other tables are set on a roof-covered verandah, while still more are in a closed dining area. David and Jane Kendrick are the owners and David, who is a self-trained chef, has been featured in *Gourmet* and *Bon Appetit* magazines. The first spoonful of the chilled Champagne Gazpacho will show you why. The menu is eclectic and includes Alaska king crabcakes with lemon-pepper aioli, fresh salmon rolled in spinach and wrapped in a thin crust before being fried. Baked wahoo, five-spice breast of duck, herb-roasted leg of lamb and a selection of pastas are frequently featured. Kendrick's is an elegant dining experience. Reservations a must. Closed on Monday from June through October.

BACCHUS
52 King Street (at Queen Cross)
☎ (340) 692-9922
Dinner only. Closed Sun & Mon
Expensive

Bacchus is the god of wine and the restaurant's wine list is renowned throughout the Caribbean. As selected by owner/sommelier Katherine, it includes wines from France, Italy, Chile and the US, among others. Many are served by the glass and, on Wednesday evenings, a featured wine is offered two for one. Bacchus is a very comfortable dining spot, especially so at the plush booths. Chef/owner Frank's openers include baked oysters, crispy calamari and a delicious grilled onion and tomato salad. "Lisbon Stew," with mussels, shrimp and a variety of local fish in a garlic bouillon, is a winner, as are the lamb shanks and pork dishes. Save room for the warm chocolate brownie or Bananas Foster. After dinner, head to the billiard table.

SAVANT
4C Hospital Street
☎ (340) 718-8666
Dinner only. Closed Sun

Expensive

This cozy bistro in a faded yellow building near the Fort (look for the parking lot) has only a small sign. You can easily walk past it. The air-conditioned inner dining room has interesting photographs and striking décor. The menu offers Thai, Mexican and Caribbean dishes. The stir-fry entrées are standouts. Select a sidewalk café table where you can sip a piña colada or freshly-dipped coffee and watch the passing scene. The garden patio is another spot to relax in. There are only a dozen tables so reservations are essential.

TUTTO BENE
Hospital Street, Gallows Bay
☎ (340) 773-5229
Dinner 6 pm-10 pm nightly
Moderate

Tutto Bene means Everything Good in Italian and it is a perfect name for this Italian restaurant, where the food, the ambience and the terrific staff all combine to make dining here fun. For many years the restaurant was located in an historic building on Company Street, but this new restaurant is much larger and is air-conditoned. The walls are brightly painted and the high ceiling is green, so it is very Caribbean in style. The menu, however, features Italian fare – southern style with spicy sauces. You can start with an antipasto, mussels or a fabulous lobster bruschetta. Linguini with shrimp or Bolognese, osso bucco and veal saltimbocca are house favorites. Daily specials are written on the mirrors. Good dessert selections.



Giovanni's Piacere on Strand Street is an in-town Italian dining spot. Very different in style (Giovanni's has muted tones, dim lighting and mahogany chairs) and food (Northern-style Italian food served here), Giovanni's has an air-conditioned dining room as well as a garden patio. Piped Italian singers and live piano weekends. Moderate. Lunch 11 am-3 pm except Sunday; dinner nightly. ☎ (340) 692-5360.

RUM RUNNERS STEAK & SEAFOOD
Caravelle Hotel (Queen Cross Street)
☎ (340) 773-6585
Moderate

With a great waterfront location and a laid-back Caribbean ambience, Rum Runners' large indoor dining area is domi-

nated by an attractive wood and glass bar and by the islands' only live lobster tank. There are also tables on the boardwalk where the boisterous Deck Bar extends over the shoreline. A crowd gathers here each evening at sunset to enjoy tropical drinks, cold beer, as well as hand-rolled sushi and sashimi. They are joined by a half-dozen tarpin who swim up each night to be fed.

Since Rum Runners functions as the hotel's dining room, it serves breakfast daily (from 7 am) and a very popular Sunday Brunch. Lobster is the specialty of the house and it is served broiled with melted butter, in salads sandwiches and bisque. The lunch and dinner menu share peel n' eat shrimp, chicken wings and conch fritters. There are many salads and sandwiches at lunch while dinner (5:30-9:30 pm) has meatloaf, baby-back ribs, vegetable lasagna, fish n' chips and Pad Thai (Thai-style stir-fried noodles). Rum Runners is consistently voted St. Croix's most popular dining spot by local newspapers. Sunday Brunch always features a great steel band. The Deck Bar stays open till 11 pm.

FORT CHRISTIAN BREW PUB
King's Alley, Christiansted
☎ (340) 713-9820
Lunch, dinner 11 am-10 pm
Inexpensive

This is the only micro-brewery in the Virgin Islands and their ales are exceptional. Foxy's Lager, Hammerhead, Blackbeard's Ale and others add to the enjoyment of the Cajun dishes served here. The casual pub is on the main floor. The menu here is heavy on burgers and sandwiches, often with a Cajun flavor. Creole chicken wraps, crawfish quesadillas, creole turkey reubens and Bourbon Street gumbo are popular. The second-floor restaurant offers heartier fare such as New Orleans shrimp pasta, creole cajun seafood gumbo has blackened catfish, crawfish, shrimp and red beans and rice. The étouffées have andouille sausages and shrimp and filet mignons and ribeye steaks are

other options. Music at dinner (6:30-10 pm) Monday evenings.

TURTLE'S DELI
55 Company Street
☎ (340) 772-3936
Inexpensive

Turtle's has opened a sister eaterie to the one in Frederiksted in the historic Indies courtyard. Tables are scattered in the tree-shaded patio. Continental breakfasts, specialty coffees, Caesar salads, gourmet sandwiches and home-made breads and pastries. Hours 9 am-4 pm except Sun. No credit cards.

HARVEY'S
11B Company Street
☎ (340) 773-3433
Inexpensive
No credit cards

There are only a dozen tables at Sara Harvey's place, so expect to wait. Locals know the food here is exceptional. Homemade soups such as callaloo or chicken, conch in butter or fried, BBQ chicken and ribs are favorites. All are served with side dishes such as fungi, rice and peas and Johnny cakes. Open 11:30 am-5 pm, closed Sun.

THE BEAN MON
Caravelle Arcade
☎ (340) 719-2200
No credit cards

Christiansted's answer to Starbucks, Serving coffees and teas. Mon-Fri from 7:30 am-4 pm and Sat 8 am-3 pm

Gallows Bay

Gallows Bay is an inlet of Christiansted Harbor. Built around a marina, it has grown greatly and now has a small

shopping mall and several restaurants, including a gourmet market. It's a five-minute walk from town.

MORNING GLORY COFFEE & TEA
Gallows Bay
☎ (340) 773-6620
Inexpensive
No credit cards

This is St. Croix's premier coffee house. Freshly roasted coffees, herbal teas, freshly squeezed fruit and vegetable juices, freshly baked muffins and yogurt are served here or available for take-out. Breakfast at 7 am-noon, lunch from noon-5 pm. It's too bad it doesn't stay open any later.

GOLDEN RAIL CAFÉ
Gallows Bay Marina
☎ (340) 719-1989
Inexpensive

This open-air eatery draws yachtsmen and a marina crowd but lots of landlubbers too. They serve all three meals here (6 am-10 pm) and a fine Sunday brunch as well. Stop by for the specials of local seafood, pasta, or chicken dishes, but also good burgers and sandwiches. Heartier fare at dinner.

NO BONES CAFÉ
Gallows Bay
☎ (340) 773-9949
Lunch, dinner. Closed Sat-Sun
Moderate

A local pub that many Crucians consider the island's best steakhouse. Lunch finds hearty soups, deli sandwiches and salads. The dinner menu features buffalo wings, fried oysters and quesadillas as openers. They are followed by fabulous steaks, seafood pasta and chicken dishes. Special nights include prime rib on Wed, St. Louis-style ribs on Thurs and all-you-can-eat shrimp on Fri. Hours are 11 am-9 pm. Reserve for special nights.

THE CASE PLACE
Chandler's Wharf, Gallows Bay
☎ (340) 719-3167
Lunch, dinner
Moderate

With a menu that ranges from corndogs to sushi, this air-conditioned spot is popular with both locals and visitors. There are over a dozen appetizers and entrées include pastas, chicken, lobster and ribs. It's quite small, so reserve for dinner.

Markets

SCHOONER BAY MARKET PLACE
East End Road (near Gallows Bay)
☎ (340) 773-3232
Hours 6:30 am-9 pm (to 7 pm Sun)

Packed into a rather small space is an excellent meat department, as well as produce, fish and seafood departments, plus a fine wines and liquors section. A "Grab and Go" section offers prepared foods. International cheeses, freshly baked breads and pastries and deli are also featured.

ANYTHING GOES GOURMET DELI
Gallows Bay Market Place
☎ (340) 773-2777

Everything looks so good, you'll have a hard time deciding what to eat. Overstuffed sandwiches with Black Forest ham, seafood salad or tuna are delicious. Salads, such as artichoke, tomato and cucumber, coleslaw or marinated mushrooms, are prepared on the premises. The hot menu includes fresh seafood, pastas and vegetarian dishes. You can order ahead. Mon-Fri 8:30 am-5:30 pm.

East of Christiansted

DUGGAN'S REEF
Reef Beach, Route 82, East End
☎ (340) 773-9800
Moderate-expensive

Duggan's has an informal setting on Reef Beach, but its menu is eclectic and, at dinner, quite upscale. The open-air terrace restaurant, which overlooks Buck Island, serves soups, salads and sandwiches, plus quiche and crêpes at lunch. Dinner is more formal (attire is casual but chic), with such openers as conch tempura, beef teriyaki on a skewer and ceviche, which is raw conch, local fish and squid "cooked" in lime juice (delicious). Main courses include the catch of the day (if there is one) prepared in five different ways, rack of lamb, pastas and curries.

SOUTH SHORE CAFÉ
East of Christiansted (Rte 62 & 624)
☎ (340) 773-9311
Dinner Thurs-Sun
Moderate

At the intersection of Route 62 and 624 stands the old Petronella Dairy Building. It is home to a charming open-air country bistro that faces Great Pond and the island's rugged south shore. Chef/owner Diane Scheuber is the hub here. Her menu features delicious prime ribs, lamb chops and steaks. Also prominent are the handmade pastas, seafood and a vegetarian special or two. She bakes fresh bread daily and makes the desserts as well. A late-night menu (after 9:30 pm) serves lighter fare. Only Visa accepted.

CHEESEBURGERS IN PARADISE
East End Road (near Green Cay Marina)
☎ (340) 778-1119
Inexpensive

Having grown into an island institution, Cheeseburgers is crowded with families and teens during the day and young

adults after the sun sets. It can get noisy as the beer flows and the nachos pass from table to table, but everyone is friendly and soon you'll be included. The burgers here, with or without the cheese, are huge and delicious. They are served with onions, mushrooms and bacon, as well as with a side-dish such as coleslaw – all for under $10. Grilled chicken sandwiches, nachos and burritos are also available. A New York strip steak with salad and baked potato is added after 5 pm. Very informal and fun. Music Thursday-Saturday nights. Take-out available. Open 11 am-10:30 pm daily.

North of Christiansted

ELIZABETH'S
Princess Plaza, North Shore Road
☎ (340) 719-0735
Dinner only, 5:30-9:30 pm except Sun
Expensive

Jason Gould is the chef/owner of this charming eaterie named for his wife, who acts as a welcoming hostess. Jason's menu is both eclectic and creative. He changes it frequently, but specialties include the crabcakes, Chilean sea bass and rack of lamb. This is an elegant spot.

H20
Hibiscus Beach Resort
La Grande Princess
☎ (340) 773-4042
Moderate

One of the island's newest "in spots", H20 is located on a stunning beach and the view from the roof-covered open-air eaterie includes Buck Island. As the hotel's restaurant, it serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. The chef/owner Adrian Duffy has created an all-day menu served from 11:30 am-9 pm daily. It includes such specialties as Coconut

saffron New Zealand mussels, Cajun tuna sashimi, warm goat cheese salad and grilled local fish. There are also pizzas and pasta dishes. A late-night menu is served on Fri and Sat. Sunday Brunch is a buffet with over 20 items. The Star Bar here is a local hangout. The décor is Caribbean, as is the ambience.

WAVES AT CANE BAY
North Shore Road
☎ (340) 778-1805
Dinner only. Closed Sun & Tues
Moderate

One of the island's most romantic dining spots sits just down the road from Cane Bay Beach. The roof-covered patio restaurant on the shore is so close to the water that the spray of crashing waves keeps diners cool. It is casual in ambience, but the menu is quite sophisticated. It includes fresh local lobsters, Smokin' Shrimp, escargot and conch fritters. There are also chicken and steak dishes. Chocolate rum cake and mango key lime pie make great closers. Open 5:30-9:30 pm.

LOBSTER REEF CAFÉ
North Shore Road
☎ (340) 719-9044
Inexpensive

If you are seeking a laid-back dining spot, don't head here. The Café draws a young, rowdy crowd – perhaps because there are over 20 items on the menu priced under $10 and that includes lobster, the house specialty. It is served as fritters, in salads and as bisque. Other favorites include prime rib, BBQ ribs, jerk chicken and steaks. Happy Hour (4-6 pm) features $2 beers.

OFF THE WALL BEACH BAR & RESTAURANT
North Shore Road (at Cane Bay)
☎ (340) 778-4771
Inexpensive

A casual, attractive outdoor eatery that offers brilliant sunsets and surf with good food and jazz, blues and steel bands under the stars. No shirt? No shoes? No problem! That attitude draws locals and visitors alike! It opens at 8 am for breakfast, goes on to bacon cheeseburgers, pizza and nachos for lunch and fresh seafood and steaks at dinner. The large menu offers lots of options and there is a kid's menu as well. No reservations, so if all the tables are full, relax in a hammock under a coconut palm with a cool piña colada.

Frederiksted

Several new restaurants have opened in town and at nearby beaches. Below, some good choices:

BLUE MOON
Strand Street
☎ (340) 772-2222
American Express only

An informal bistro on the waterfront, Blue Moon's walls are adorned with attractive posters and paintings. The food is international, with grilled pizza and portobello mushrooms, barbecued shrimp and lots of fresh fish. They have homemade breads and desserts. Jazz at Blue Moon every Friday night at 10 pm when the kitchen closes.

LE ST. TROPEZ
67 King Street
☎ (340) 772-3000
Expensive

In a lovely courtyard filled with flowering trees and plants, this is a café/restaurant with a Gaelic touch. Great onion soup, hot sandwich croques monsieur or salade Niçoise are

lunch favorites. Dinner is served at candlelit tables. Escargots, frog's legs and homemade pates are accompanied by fine wines. Gift shop too.

VILLA MORALES
Plot 82C, Route 70
☎ (340) 772-0556
Inexpensive

This is St. Croix's premier Puerto Rican restaurant and it is owned by a family that has lived here for generations. There is indoor seating as well as outdoor. Roasted or stewed goat, fried fish with rice and beans, stewed beef or conch dishes are most popular. They serve breakfast too. Reservations a must. Open only Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



Two miles from Frederiksted, near the Whim Estate, Villa Morales closes in August.

TURTLE'S DELI
Strand Street
☎ (340) 772-3676
Inexpensive

Turtle's, a local favorite, is a take-out deli and coffee-shop that has tables on the beach under the sea grape trees or on the nearby patio. Continental breakfast, good salads and gourmet sandwiches. Open 8:30 am-3 pm except Sun. No credit cards.

BEACHSIDE CAFÉ
Sand Castle On the Beach, Frederiksted
☎ (340) 772-1266
Lunch, dinner. Closed Tues-Wed
Moderate

The outdoor dining patio overlooks one of St. Croix's most beautiful beaches. Part of the island's best-known gay resort, it is a lovely spot to sip a cocktail at sunset. It has a varied menu, with fresh seafood, duck, pork, pastas and ethnic

Caribbean dishes. There's an active bar. Daily specials served from 11:30 am to 9 pm. Reservations are a must for Sunday Brunch.



The Beachside Café is half a mile south of Frederiksted.

After Dark



Nightlife on the island is low-key and most often revolves around the resort hotels and the island's restaurants. No imported stars, but lots of local talent and good music for dancing and listening. Both Christiansted and Frederiksted have several spots that stay open late for drinking and music. Jazz, calypso, reggae, rock, folk singing and steel bands are the most popular forms of entertainment. Check *Weekend* in the Friday edition of the *St. Croix Avis* and the entertainment page of *St. Croix This Week*. The island's newest attraction is the Divi Carina Bay Casino on the island's south coast (see below).

Some suggestions follow:

Club 54, 54B Company Street, Christiansted, is the most popular late-night hangout. It has indoor and outdoor spaces and multi-level decks where you have a drink or some pizza and listen to live music. There's also a big-screen TV that is usually tuned to major sports events. They have a variety of "event" nights as well. ☎ (340) 713-8025.

Pier 69, 69 King Street, Christiansted, has live music several nights a week. It ranges from jazz to R&B or a singer with guitar. ☎ (340) 772-0069.

Cheeseburgers in Paradise, East End Road, has live music several nights a week usually a group playing reggae or country music. ☎ (340) 773-1119.

The Galleon, at Green Cay Marina, East End Road, is an excellent choice for dinner and the piano music continues on till 11 pm. Good parking. ☎ (340) 773-9949.

Divi Carina Bay Casino, Turner Hole at Grapetree Beach, South Shore Road, has live music in the comfortable lounge several nights a week starting at 9 pm. Most often the beat is R&B. ☎ (340) 773-9700.

Lobster Reef Café, La Vallee, North Shore Road, has live music on Thurs and Fri from 6 pm to 9 pm. It draws a young, lively crowd. ☎ (340) 719-9044.

Two Plus Two, La Grande Princesse, North Shore Road, has a DJ several nights a week and live music on weekend nights. Dancing is a major lure here. ☎ (340) 773-3710.

Lost Dog Pub, King Street, Frederiksted, has live music several nights a week. ☎ (340) 772-3526.

Sand Castle On The Beach, Beach Road near Frederiksted, is a lively spot with a great location. The music is live most nights. ☎ (340) 772-1205.

Fort Christian Brew Pub, King's Alley, Christiansted, handcrafts ales, specializes in Cajun food and has a guitar soloist one day each week. Call to check the day. ☎ (340) 718-9820.

Off The Wall Beach Bar and Restaurant, North Shore Road, has a steel band several nights a week and a jazz or blues group other nights. ☎ (340) 778-4771.

Island House at Chenay Bay Resort, East End Road, has steel bands and calypso and reggae music several nights a week. ☎ (340) 773-2918.

West Indian Shows & Buffets

Spend one evening at a typical West Indian barbecue and show. A steel band plays during dinner and for dancing. The show consists of broken bottle dancing (where the hero walks, jumps, dances and writhes atop a pile of broken whiskey bottles), fire eating, and a limbo dance. Some include a mocko jumbi troupe where performers dance on stilts.

Island House at Chenay Bay Resort, East End Road, has theme dinners several nights a week. The West Indian buffet and show is held on Sat. ☎ (340) 773-2918.

Harbormaster Beach Club & Restaurant, at Hotel On the Cay, has a beach barbecue and a West Indian show with fire eaters, broken bottle dancing and mocko jumbi. Tues nights at 7 pm. ☎ (340) 773-2035, ext 450.

Carambola Beach Resort, North Shore Road, offers its popular Pirates Night buffet and Caribbean show every Fri night. The show starts about 8:30 pm. ☎ (340) 778-3800.

Divi Carina Bay Casino

Real excitement greeted the official opening of the Divi Carina Bay Resort and its casino. The hotels along beautiful Grapetree Bay were destroyed by Hurricane Hugo and never rebuilt. For years, rumors flew that a new hotel and the Virgin Islands' first casino would open here. While it took longer than most expected, the reality seems worth the wait. The modern bi-level casino is across Route 80 from the hotel. The gaming tables, on the second level, include blackjack, craps, stud poker, roulette wheels and scores of slot machines. The Mongoose Lounge, also on the gaming floor, has a bar, some food and live entertainment. You do not need a passport, but you will need some form of ID on your first visit when you receive an entry cart good for your entire stay. There is plenty of parking. Open Mon-Fri, noon-4 am. Sat, Sun and holidays, noon-6 am.



There is **Casino shuttle bus** service to and from Christiansted, Frederiksted and hotels on all parts of the island. Schedules are not regular, so check with your concierge or ☎ (340) 773-9700.

Cultural Events

Concerts



The Whim Plantation Museum Concert Series is in its 21st year. Concerts are held in the Great House on Fri and Sat evenings throughout the year. Most feature international artists. Admission fees vary with the event. ☎ (340) 772-0598 for current schedules.

Sunet Jazz Frederiksted is held on the third Fri each month. Local artists and those from nearby islands play from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. Bring a blanket or chair. Check at Tourist Board.

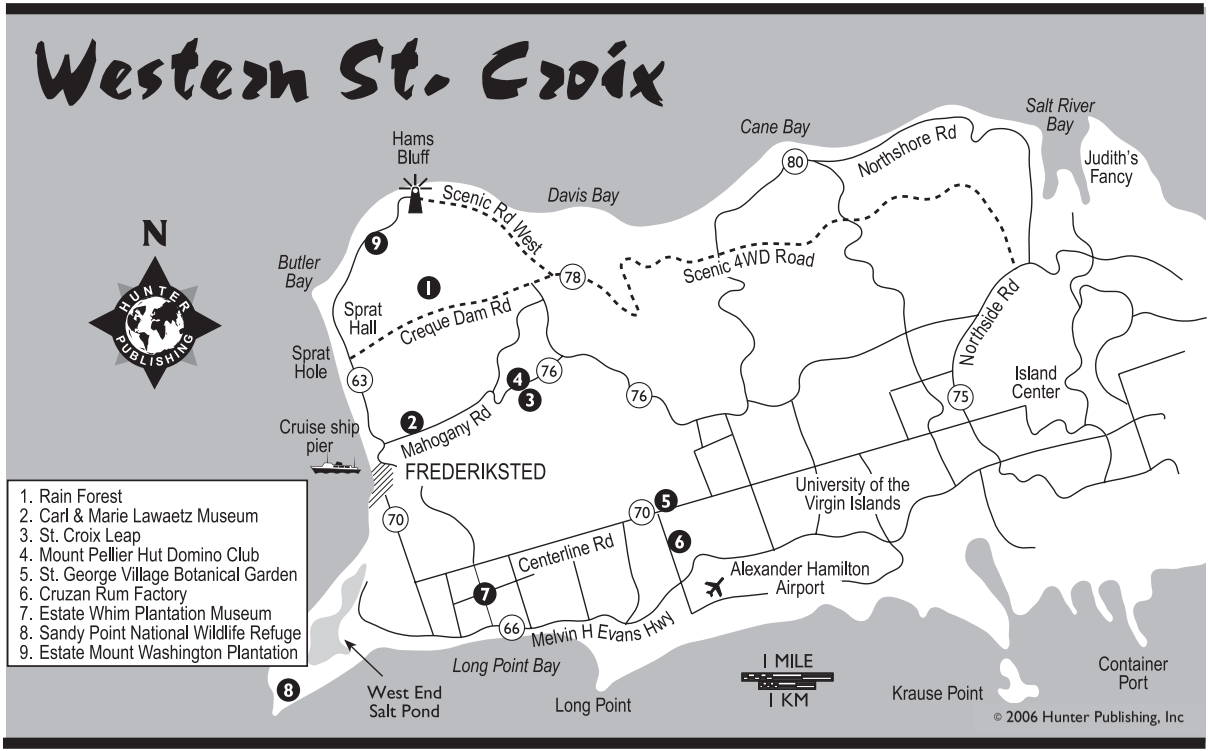
Theater & Dance

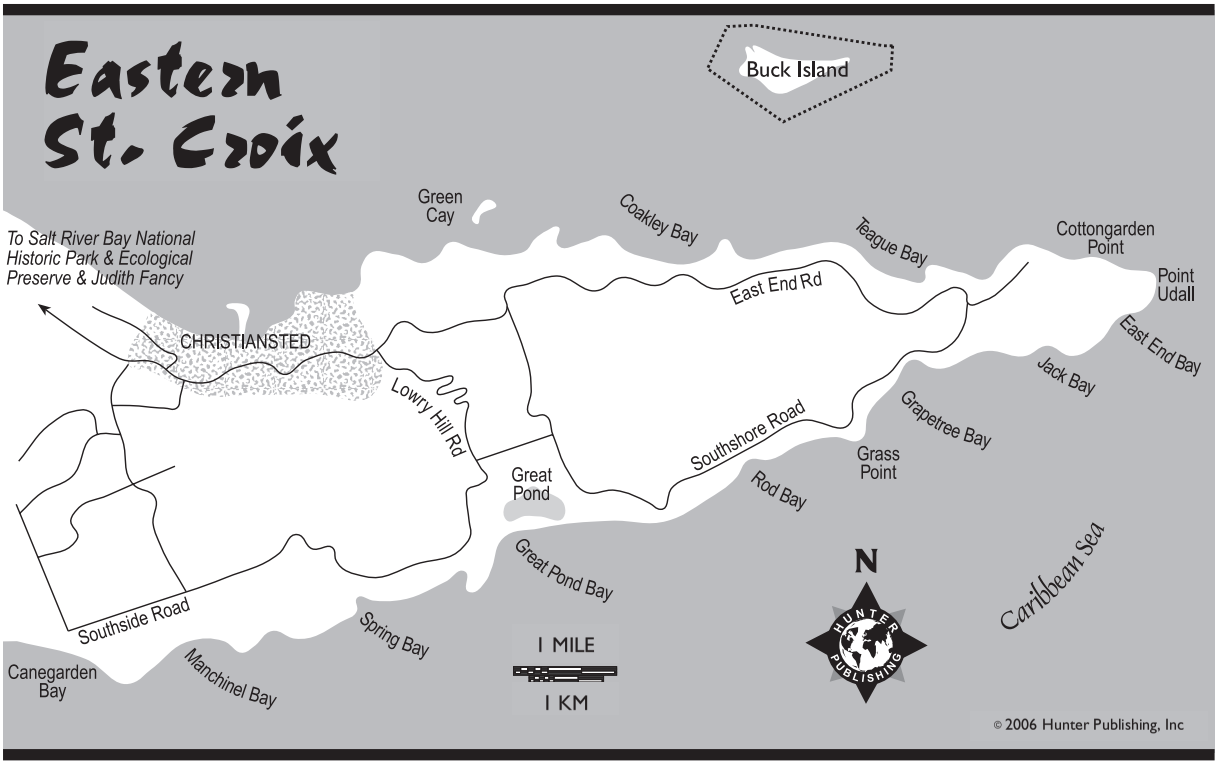


The Island Center for Performing Arts, ☎ (340) 778-5271, is the site of concerts and shows throughout the year. Local theater and dance groups perform here. **The Caribbean Community Theatre**, ☎ (340) 773 1983, often presents musicals and comedies. The **Caribbean Dance Company**, ☎ (340) 778-8824, a folkloric group, performs here and at many of the resort hotels. Call for current schedules.

Harbour Nights/Crucian Fruits

Harbour Nights is a cultural street festival held on and near the Frederiksted Pier every other Wed night. Local calypso and quelbe bands perform, as do mocko jumbies and traditional quadrille troupes. Vendors sell local delicacies and unique handmade crafts. Crucian Fruits, held in conjunction with Harbour Nights, is a cultural performance that explores the island's history through song, dance and dramatic readings. Check schedules at ☎ (340) 772-4000.


Western St. Croix
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Hams Bluff
Scenic Rd West
Davis Bay
Cane Bay
Salt River Bay
Judith's Fancy
Northshore Rd
Scenic 4WD Road
Butler Bay
Sprat Hall
Creque Dam Rd
Sprat Hole
Northside Rd
Island Center
Cruise ship pier
Mahogany Rd
FREDERIKSTED
University of the Virgin Islands
Centerline Rd
Alexander Hamilton Airport
Melvin H Evans Hwy
Long Point Bay
West End Salt Pond
Long Point
1 MILE
1 KM
Krause Point
Container Port
© 2006 Hunter Publishing, Inc
1. Rain Forest
2. Carl & Marie Lawaetz Museum
3. St. Croix Leap
4. Mount Pellier Hut Domino Club
5. St. George Village Botanical Garden
6. Cruzan Rum Factory
7. Estate Whim Plantation Museum
8. Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge
9. Estate Mount Washington Plantation


Eastern St. Croix
Buck Island
Green Cay
Coakley Bay
Teague Bay
Cottongarden Point
Point Udall
East End Bay
Jack Bay
Grapetree Bay
Grass Point
Rod Bay
Caribbean Sea
To Salt River Bay National Historic Park & Ecological Preserve & Judith Fancy
CHRISTIANSTED
Lowry Hill Rd
East End Rd
Southshore Road
Great Pond
Great Pond Bay
Southside Road
Spring Bay
Manchinel Bay
Canegarden Bay
1 MILE
1 KM
N
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Did you know? Quelbe is an indigenous music, both instrumental and vocal, that has developed from a mixture of music of the European settlers and of the slaves.

Jump Ups

Christiansted's answer to Harbour Nights, Jump Ups are held four times annually. Local bands perform, as do mocko jumbi troupes. Shops and restaurants stay open late and offer special discounts during this mini-carnival. ☎ (340) 713-8012.

Crucian Christmas Fiesta

A local favorite where both youngsters and oldsters root for their favorite. Held in King's Alley on Mon nights and on the Waterfront on Fri nights. Both start at 5 pm.



St. Croix A-Z

AIRLINES

American, ☎ (800) 474-4884

American Eagle, ☎ (800) 474-4884

Delta, ☎ (800) 221-1212

Liat, ☎ (340) 778-9930

Seaborne Seaplane, ☎ (340) 773-6442

US Airways, ☎ (800) 622-1015

ATMS/BANKS

There are ATMs at the **airport** and at the **Divi Carina Bay Resort Casino**. The **FirstBank** building on King Street, Christiansted and **Banco Popular** on King Street, Christiansted have ATMs. **Scotia Bank** on Strand Street, Frederiksted, also has an ATM. Others are located in

Sunny Isle Shopping Center and **Schooner Bay Market Place**, East End Road.

CHURCHES

In Christiansted:

Moravian, ☎ (340) 773-1217

Catholic, ☎ (340) 773-7564

Lutheran, ☎ (340) 773-1320

Anglican, ☎ (340) 778-8221

In Frederiksted:

Catholic, ☎ (340) 772-0138

Episcopal, ☎ (340) 772-0818

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Dial 911 for police, fire or ambulance.

HORSE RACING

Takes place on weekends at **Doc James Race Track** near the airport. Check with your hotel clerk to see if it is the season.

INTERNET CAFÉ

Need to check your e-mail or contact your office? Stop into **Strand Street Station** in the Pan Am Pavilion. You can make copies, faxes and get film processed. Open 9 am-7 pm. ☎ (340) 719-6245.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

☎ (340) 773-0096

MEDICAL SERVICES

24-hour emergency service is available at the **Gov. Luis Hospital** near Sunny Isle, ☎ (340) 778-6311, and **Ingeborg Nesbitt Clinic**, Frederiksted, ☎ (340) 772-0260.

NEWSPAPERS

The Daily News (printed in St. Thomas) and ***The St. Croix Avis*** are printed daily (except Sun). The ***San Juan Star***,

Miami Herald, ***The New York Times*** and ***USA Today*** are flown in daily.

RADIO/TV

There are six radio stations on St. Croix, four of them FM. Cable TV stations include HBO and CNN.


gotostcroix.com
Produced entirely by island residents, GoToStCroix.com has useful info, links, articles, maps, photos, event calendars, and live webcams to help make your time on St. Croix great.
Locally grown, globally known!

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